AN EXAMINATION
OF SOME RECENT THEORIES ON GREEK TRAGEDY,
IN THEIR BEARING UPON
THE INTERPRETATION OF CERTAIN PLAYS.

Thesis presented

- by -

WINIFRED ANDREWS

for the M.A. Degree.

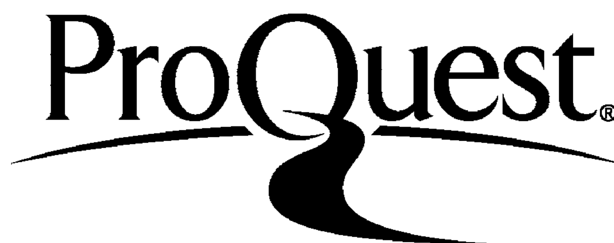
April, 1929.

ProQuest Number: 10096332

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS
The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript
and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed,
a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10096332

Published by ProQuest LLC(2016). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.
This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

INTRODUCTION.

In entering upon a consideration of the plots of extant Greek plays it is impossible to pass over without examination the various theories which have been brought forward concerning the origin of tragedy. In every department of literature origins must of necessity have a considerable effect on the finished form, and criticism is justified in expecting that any satisfactory theory of the origins of Greek tragedy shall shed light upon the problems of interpretation rather than create new difficulties.

It will therefore be the object of the present discussion to show, in the first place, that theories like those of Ridgeway, Murray and Miss Harrison, whatever their value from mythological and anthropological points of view, give us little help in the understanding of the plays as we have them; for such writers, in order to establish their own theories, invent hypotheses which raise problems far more serious than any that originally existed. Secondly, it will be necessary to consider the rationalizing system of Dr. Verrall and his follower, Professor Norwood, who put forward an interpretation of certain plays infinitely more difficult of comprehension than the matter that they propose to elucidate; finally, an explanation

of certain points of difficulty will be attempted upon an entirely different basis, which appears to have been as yet unduly neglected,[1] — the deep and far-reaching differences of thought and feeling between the people of fifth-century Athens and the present day (upon which we cannot too strongly insist), and the conditions[2] of dramatic production in the two ages.

---

1. See, however, Miss Glover's paper on "The Appreciation and Interpretation of Greek Drama", in Proceedings of the Classical Association for 1928.

2. For these see Flickinger, The Greek Theater and its Drama, 1918.

CHAPTER I.

The theories of origin have already been many times discussed and criticised, and each, no doubt, has its firm adherents still; but for want of adequate external evidence, and because of the debatable quality of internal evidence, it appears that in reality the question still remains open, and that the undeniable elements of reason that are to be found in each of these theories are yet to be combined in a new and more adequate solution of the problem.

The two theories which have most bearing on the plots of the plays are the hero-worship idea of Dr. Ridgeway[1] and the Eniautos-Daimon of Miss Harrison and Professor Murray.[2] Both these theories are founded to a great extent on internal evidence and depend, especially the latter, on the tracing of minute details and stereotyped forms.

Dr. Ridgeway's view is as follows: that tragedy originated in choral performances in honour of dead heroes, held at their tombs, and that the cult of Dionysus was later superimposed upon this ancient hero-worship, which fact explains the Dionysiac elements in tragedy. He sees in the thymele a survival of the original tomb.

---

1. Origin of Tragedy, 1910.

2. Themis, 1912, with Excursus by Gilbert Murray on "Ritual Forms preserved in Greek Tragedy".

This theory has been admirably treated by A.W. Pickard-Cambridge, both in his review of the work[1.] and in his own book "Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy".[2.] The only sound piece of external evidence on which it rests is the transference of the rites at Sicyon from the hero Adrastus to Dionysus;[3.] no other such transference is known, in Greece at least, and parallels adduced from non-Hellenic races are always of doubtful value, being frequently capable of some other explanation. Moreover, there is no evidence that the laments for Adrastus were of a dramatic form. The much-quoted proverb οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸν Διόνυσον rather suggests a transference from Dionysiac to non-Dionysiac subjects than the reverse; and this is a considerable stumbling-block to Ridgeway's theory.

Satisfactory external evidence on such points has proved extremely difficult to obtain; if, however, the plays themselves could be better understood and appreciated through the acceptance of this view of the origin of tragedy in a hero-cult, that would in itself be a strong argument in its favour.

---

1. Class Rev. 1912, p. 52.

2. Oxford, 1927.

3. Herod. V. 67. <u>ad.fin.</u> Κλεισθένης δὲ χοροὺς μὲν τῷ Διονύσῳ ἀπέδωκε, τὴν δὲ ἄλλην θυσίην Μελανίππῳ.

In Chapter IV of his "Origin of Tragedy", Dr. Ridgeway points out what he considers to be survivals of the primitive type in the extant plays. The action of the Persae centres round the tomb of Darius, of the Choephoroi round that of Agamemnon. The Supplices, one of the earliest plays, centres, according to Dr. Ridgeway, around a mound with images of the gods. This mound was "probably once sacred only to the dead that lay within, but later shared by the gods who preside over contests", i.e., Zeus, Apollo, Poseidon, Hermes;[1] this is taken as a reminiscence of the funeral games with which the dead were honoured. Of Sophocles he admits there is no extant play in which a tomb actually appears on the stage, but burial rites and the great value attached to the bones of heroes form a leading feature in at least three, - Ajax, Antigone and Oedipus Coloneus. A central feature of the Helena of Euripides is the sanctuary afforded to Helen by the tomb of Proteus, while in the Hecuba "the interest, though not the action" centres round the tomb of Achilles at Sigeum. Where there is no tomb, there is frequently a κομμός or lamentation for the dead, for example, in the Suppliants, Andromache, Phoenissae, Alcestis, Hippolytus, Troades and Iphigenia in Tauris. Certain plays he regards as specially suited for performance at the festivals of heroes — the Hippolytus and the Rhesus — while in

1. Op.cit., p. 128.

the Persae, Eumenides and Hecuba ghosts of departed heroes, and others, play a prominent part.

For lamentations, at least, no ritual explanation is necessary, considering that such scenes are inevitable in tragedy.

The action of the Persae does undoubtedly centre round the tomb of Darius, as it naturally would if his ghost was later to appear from thence; the action of the Choephoroi does centre round the tomb of Agamemnon, but it would seem to be more natural to attribute this to a first-hand reflection of the veneration commonly paid to the dead in Greece in the time of Aeschylus, and to his own desire to keep tragedy on a slightly supernatural basis, and to illustrate the workings of powers beyond human control, than to a survival of some ritual origin. So far Dr. Ridgeway's facts at any rate have been correct, though his application of them may seem a little forced. But he seems to have no justification whatever for stating that the central object of the Supplices was a mound sacred to the dead.

With regard to the Ajax of Sophocles, there certainly seems at first to be rather more in Dr. Ridgeway's theory. After the death of Ajax, i.e., from v. 865 to the end of the play, the action is entirely engaged by a discussion as to his right to burial. This lengthy controversy comes

somewhat as an anticlimax. However, it is not sufficient for a theory to be borne out by one play alone; and it will, moreover, be shown later that this difficulty admits of another explanation which seems more in harmony with the spirit of Greek literary art.[1] The burial in the Antigone is the whole point of the legend; and to the importance attached to the bones of Oedipus the same argument applies as was brought forward in dealing with the Choephoroi, namely that great veneration for the dead was customary in Greece. To trace a survival of hero-cult in a tomb which is not in the play, but merely included in the interest, is surely to stretch the evidence of the Hecuba to fit a preconceived idea. As to the question of certain plays being peculiarly suitable for performance at the festivals of heroes, this suggestion seems to be based on the aetiological explanations of various rites contained in the plays themselves. But this aetiological tendency is common to many writers in the time of Euripides, and if Dr. Ridgeway were to follow such an argument to its logical conclusion, he would find himself constrained to include the Iliad and the Odyssey among works originating in a hero-cult. The reasoning from the appearance of ghosts of departed heroes and others seems sufficiently refuted by the weakness of the other arguments.

---

1. See Chap. IV.

It appears, then, that although the worship of the dead was an undisputed fact in fifth-century Greece, little or no light is shed on the difficulties of the extant plays by the assumption of an origin of tragedy in any hero-cult.

Another theory which is akin to that of Dr. Ridgeway is the theory that tragedy originated in a ritual play dealing with the pathos of Dionysus as an "Eniautos-Daimon", a kind of vegetation-spirit, with traces of ancestral ghost and venerated hero. This theory of the Eniautos-Daimon is set forth in Miss Harrison's "Themis", and its particular application to Greek tragedy is worked out in an excursus by Professor Gilbert Murray.[1] The writer sums up his view of the origin of tragedy in these words:[2] "The following note ... assumes that tragedy is in origin a Ritual Dance, a Sacer Ludus, representing normally the Aition, or supposed historical cause, or some current ritual practice..... Further, it assumes, in accord with the overwhelming weight of ancient tradition, that the Dance in question is originally or centrally that of Dionysus; and it regards Dionysus, in this connection, as the spirit of the Dithyramb or Spring Drômenon, an 'Eniautos-Daimon', who represents the cyclic death and rebirth of the world, including the rebirth of the tribe by the return of the heroes or dead ancestors". He

1. Themis, pp. 341-363. "On the Ritual Forms Preserved in Greek Tragedy".

2. Ibid., p. 341.

goes on to set forth in detail the separate elements of the ritual play which are to be looked for in tragedy, deriving them from "the kind of myth which seems to underly the various 'Eniautos' celebrations". These are as follows: 1. Agon or Contest; 2. Pathos of the Year Daimon; 3. Messenger; 4. Threnos; 5. Anagnorisis of the slain Daimon, followed by 6. his Theophany.

Now it would be natural to expect that such a complete and definite system of ritual forms should be most easily traceable in the earliest known examples of Greek tragedy, while the form was still undeveloped and nearest to its origins. Professor Murray, however, remarks "Euripides being the clearest and most definite in his ritual forms, we will take him first".[1] Surely the fact that it is in Euripides, rather than in Aeschylus, that the forms are most clearly seen is in itself strong evidence against the theory.

There is one element which Professor Murray admits is never found in tragedy itself, though it is an integral part of the Sacer Ludus. This is the joyous return of the reliving Daimon and his rout of attendant daimons; for though tragedy frequently ends on a note of calm and comfort its close could not by any means be considered an "outburst

---

1. <u>Themis</u>, p. 354.

of joy". The solution brought forward for this difficulty is that the missing element was supplied by the satyr-play, which followed the group of three tragedies. This theory cannot be established by reference to the plays of Aeschylus, and there is no evidence for the production of tetralogies before his time. Moreover, the satyr-play is said to have originated later than tragedy proper, being the invention of Pratinas, and is not therefore as closely connected with the preceding plays as this hypothesis requires.[1]

The ritual sequence is worked out in considerable detail in the extant plays. A few quotations will illustrate the manner in which the order of the various parts has to be altered and their meaning extended to fit them into the plots in any satisfactory manner:- Medea, "there cannot be a Threnos because that is definitely forbidden by Medea, vv. 1378 ff.". (If there ought to be a threnos why make Medea forbid it?) Hecuba: "The messenger comes early in the play, hence we cannot have a theophany immediately following it. In compensation a ghost appears at the beginning". Phoenissae. "... the burial arrangements of Eteocles and Polyneices and the expulsion of Oedipus to Mt. Kithaeron - perhaps a faded theophany." Heracles. "Instead

---

1. Prof. Murray in his Excursus (p. 344) notes this point, but does not regard it as a serious objection to his view, since in any case tragedy developed from "something akin to the satyrs". But this is surely a very different matter from supposing that a group of tragedies was always followed by a satyr-play, to produce the necessary note of rejoicing at the end.

of a god, Theseus appears, ex machina as it were." Electra. "The messenger is omitted." Persae. "A perfectly typical sequence, except that the Agon seems to be absent." (This is supplied by the Agon between Europe and Asia in Atossa's dream!) Prometheus. "As substitute for the theophany, a supernatural earthquake involving the cleaving of Earth and the revealing of Hell." § Such a system obviously creates far more difficulties than it removes. It is significant that in none of the three plays quoted as typical, (i.e., Bacchae, Hippolytus and Andromache), nor indeed in any of the extant plays, is the person or god in the epiphany the same as the actual one who has been slain. In the Bacchae, Pentheus is slain and Dionysus appears: Professor Murray explains the discrepancy by the suggestion that Pentheus is in reality only another form of Dionysus himself. Similarly, in the Hippolytus, Hippolytus is slain, while Artemis appears in the theophany; this does not admit of a similar explanation. In the Andromache, again, Neoptolemus is slain, while Thetis appears ex machina at the end of the play: here there is less connection than ever, for Artemis was at least Hipploytus' patroness. When we consider how extremely difficult it is to find the required elements in any readily recognisable form even in the earlier drama, - for among Aeschylus' plays the Supplices, Septem, Prometheus and Agamemnon have not even a theophany, one of the most

essential points according to Murray's theory, - and that it is practically impossible to trace them in the later plays, except perhaps in the Bacchae, an exceptional work, it seems evident that we must dismiss this theory too, with Dr. Ridgeway's, as unhelpful from the point of view of interpretation.

After all, there can be no plot that does not contain an "agon", or contest of some description, messenger's speeches are inevitable, and what is more natural to tragedy than the death of a hero or lamentations for his misfortunes? To attempt to trace in all these normal elements a survival of ritual form is more likely to lead to further difficulties in the understanding of the plots than to enlightenment.

It is, of course, highly probable, and indeed almost certain that both the worship of the dead and some type of vegetation rites had a considerable influence on the form of tragedy in its earliest stages, but it is not likely that the actual ritual forms remained unaltered, inserted, as it were, into the fabric of tragedy, and cramping the poet's imagination and constructive skill for many years after he began to have the mastery over his work. The same objection applies to all ritual theories of origin, — to Rostrup's initiation theory,[1] Farnell's ritual duel between Xanthus and Melanthus,[2] W.A. Cook's connection of

1. Attic Tragedy in the Light of Theatrical History, Ch. III, pp. 77ff.

2. Cults of the Greek States, Vol.V, ch. V, ad.fin.

tragedy with the Lenaea and the rites of Dionysus Zagreus;[1] all these theorists seek to find in tragedy a detailed preservation of some particular form of ritual or folk-play, putting upon the plots for this purpose an interpretation which they will not stand, and often drawing important inferences from analogies with savage tribes in a very different stage of civilization from that which prevailed in Greece in the sixth and early fifth centuries before Christ.

1. *Zeus*, Vol. I, pp. 665-680.

Additional note to Chapter I.

It has been demonstrated that the attempt to establish the theory of the survival of primitive ritual forms in the works of the three great fifth-century tragedians involves considerable distortion, both of the required ritual elements and of the plays themselves. It is significent, however, that a similar theory has been worked out with much greater success in connection with comedy by F.M. Cornford, in his book entitled, "The Origin of Attic Comedy" (1914).

It is natural that ritual motives should be more easy to make out in comedy than in tragedy, since, as he himself points out, "the type of drama which is the more careless of form and structure, and interested rather in character than in plot, naturally has less reason to obliterate its primitive outlines".[1] Comedy was not bound to legendary characters or mythological plots, as tragedy for the most part was, and it was therefore free to develop on lines more closely related to the original ritual from which Murray and Cornford suppose both to have sprung.

The very fact that such a theory can be work out so convincingly with regard to comedy seems in itself a strong point in favour of a similar origin of tragedy. It is not, however, the aim of this discussion to examine the question of the origin of tragedy as such, but to consider it only in its bearing on the appreciation and interpretation of the plays.

---

1. Op.cit., p. 190.

CHAPTER II.

Turning from the general origins of tragedy to the actual plays, it will be well to consider next yet another type of theory, by which supposed difficulties in the plots have been explained, - the rationalizing system of Dr. Verrall. Dr. Verrall has applied his theory in the main to the plots of Euripides, in his two books "Euripides the Rationalist" and "4 Plays of Euripides". The general arguments applied to the plots of the Andromache, Helen, Heracles and Orestes in this latter book are as follows: 1. Andromache. The play is a sequel, and without the supposition of a previous play is incomprehensible. After the first play had been lost, an abstract of it was made by one Democrates (or Timocrates), and appended to the extant play. This argumnt also is now lost. 2. Helena. This play was in the first place performed privately at the house of a lady on the island of Makris in connection with a festival of the Thesmophoria. Euripides makes the occasion an opportunity for a humorous apology to women in general, in answer to the charge that he never portrayed one in a good light. The play is a "cento of parodies", chiefly of Euripides' own work, and especially of the

Andromache and Iphigenia Taurica. 3. <u>Heracles</u>. Heracles was merely an ordinary man, who had done many remarkable deeds in more or less unknown parts of the world, by reason of which he was credited with divine parentage and superhuman powers. He was also subject to recurrent periods of madness, during which he supported the rumours of his own wonderful achievements, though in his sane moments he knew them to be false. The appearance of Iris and Lyssa is a dream of the chorus, who do not remember it afterwards. Heracles' madness, therefore, was not sent by the gods, but was already latent in him. 4. <u>Orestes</u>. The Orestes, like the Helen, was originally written for private performance, and had to be extensively recast to admit of the introduction of a chorus. The plot originally ended with the death of Orestes, Electra, Pylades, Hermione and Helen, the ending being altered and the theophany grafted on later to satisfy the requirements of the Dionysiac festival. The play entirely ignores the sanction of the oracle for Orestes' deed, and the general attitude is that of the fifth century rather than that of the legendary antiquity in which Aeschylus sets the story of Orestes' fortunes.

The companion book, "Euripides the Rationalist", treats the plots of the Alcestis, Ion and Iphigenia in Tauris on the same lines.

The main foundation of this rationalistic method of interpretation is the idea that Euripides is continually fighting against and exposing the gods of traditional mythology, and a large part of the argument turns on the supposition that whatever is spoken "ex machina" is ipso facto of doubtful veracity.

It is certain that these two books of Dr. Verrall have done a great deal to renew our interest in Euripides' work, but it seems unlikely that many people are prepared to accept such a system of interpretation without reserve. There are too many fundamental points that we are asked to assume, without the slightest trace of any convincing evidence being produced.

We have to believe, for instance, in an extensive reading public, which rejoiced in discussing and examining the plays over and over again, ever finding new subtleties. We have to believe that Euripides wrote for this reading public rather than for the stage, and that nevertheless he gained permission to produce these incomprehensible plays, and even succeeded in certain cases in surpassing his fellow-competitors, who still wrote in the old straightforward style, that the ten judges, chosen more or less at random, and for no special literary powers, realised in a flash all the subtleties which Dr. Verrall took such pains

to discover, and that the audience, that vast body consisting of the whole free population of Athens, with a considerable leavening of foreigners, was equipped with the keen insight and almost superhuman memory necessary for the unravelling of those intricacies which Dr. Verrall sets forth, and which our slower minds are unable to comprehend without many backward references in the printed text. Then again, we have to believe that it was the regular thing in fifth century Athens for plays to be performed in private houses before a select company of personal friends, and later recast and often entirely transformed for production at the City Dionysia, with great detriment to their internal structure — which, however, presumably passed unnoticed by the archon — though not a word of any such performance has come down to us. There are, no doubt, many common practices of the ancient Greeks of which little notice has survived, but we are not justified in taking as the foundation-stone of a theory a practice which is so purely hypothetical as this of private performances.

So much for the general objections to Dr. Verrall's treatment of Euripides. It would be beyond the scope of this discussion to deal with each of the plays contained in his two volumes in details, though the study is one of very great interest; an examination of two of them, the Andromache

from "Four Plays of Euripides"[1], and the Alcestis from "Euripides the Rationalist"[2], will perhaps show on how extremely controversial a footing the theory rests, and how little help it gives to the understanding of the plays.

The position which Dr. Verrall supposes known to the audience before the opening of the Andromache is as follows:- After the death of Achilles the only hope of the Greeks lay in the help of Neoptolemus. To obtain this, Menelaus had promised him his daughter, already betrothed to Orestes. After the murder of Clytaemnestra both claimed the promise, and Orestes, owing to his guilt of homicide, was rejected. He tried to persuade Hermione to go away with him, but failed. Later Neoptolemus became involved in enmity with the powers at Delphi (by demanding from Apollo satisfaction for his father's death), and also took Andromache into his house, thereby rousing the jealousy of Hermione. Menelaus now thought fit to help Orestes against Neoptolemus, and therefore, having stirred on Hermione to attack Andromache he deserted her at the critical moment, thus leaving her ready to accept Orestes' offer of assistance. Orestes undertook the removal of Neoptolemus, by the aid of the Delphians, with whom he had formed a formed a close connection during his stay there after Agamemnon's death.

1. Pp. 1-42.

2. Pp. 1-128.

All this valuable information is supposed to have been contained in a lost play which served as a preface to the Andromache, though it was not performed in immediate conjunction with it. Before the existence, then, of the prologue of Democrates, the audience must be presumed to have realised that the position at the outset is the same as that disclosed in the previous play. When two plays, however, are based on the same legend, they do not always represent the situation in the same way, except, of course, in a tetralogy, so that this assumption would not be automatic.

The evidence for the existence of some such play is drawn from three sources, the Scholiast on Andr. 445, a supposed mistake in Schol. Andr. 964, and the second argument to the play.

(1) Schol. Andr. 445 says εἰλικρινῶς δὲ τοὺς τοῦ δράματος χρόνους οὐκ ἔστι λαβεῖν· οὐ δεδίδακται γὰρ Ἀθήνησιν. ὁ δὲ Καλλίμαχος ἐπιγραφῆναι φησι τῇ τραγῳδίᾳ Δημοκράτην.

From this are drawn two conclusions; firstly, that the internal chronology is hard to grasp, secondly, that Democrates wrote a prologue containing the essence of the information given in the lost first play. With regard to the first point, it seems much more satisfactory to

take τοὺς χρόνους[1] as "the date"; the plural is hardly unusual, and τὸν χρόνον would be ambiguous (= the extent of time covered by the play). This is a more natural interpretation than "the internal chronology", and is strengthened by the following οὐ δεδίδακται γὰρ Ἀθήνησι[2] (which Dr. Verrall carefully omits in his quotation). The point is, of course, the date of production cannot be exactly ascertained because the play was not produced at Athens, and is therefore not noted in the theatre records of the City Dionysia. "The name of Democrates is at the head of the play"; can this be taken to mean that he wrote a prologue of which we have no trace, summing up a former play which is equally lost? It might surely rather mean that the play was produced either under Democrates' name, or perhaps in his term of office, at some place other than Athens: Dr. Verrall's interpretation gives the words a strained, and almost impossible sense. Moreover, this is only what "Callimachus says"; it is not even first-hand information from the writer of the note.

(2) Dr. Verrall takes *l*. 694, ἦλθον δὲ σὰς μὲν οὐ σέβων ἐπιστολὰς ... as "I have come, disregarding your letter (which bade me not come). This presupposes some previous refusal of Hermione to entertain Orestes'

---

1. Cf. Aeschines κατὰ Κτησιφῶντος, §62. ἧκον οἱ τῆς κρίσεως χρόνοι = the appointed date for the trial has arrived.

2. Four plays of Euripides, p. 24, note 1.

offer of help. The Scholiast, however, explains the line as "I have come, not because I received any letter from you, but ...", a much more natural sense for the words.

(3) The words in the second argument to the play, τὸ δὲ δρᾶμα τῶν δευτέρων are certainly obscure, but the common interpretation "the play is one of the second-rate plays" seems more likely than "the play is one of the second plays", i.e., a sequel. If this meaning were correct we should have to suppose that the system of play and sequel was commonly known, an hypothesis which surely makes too great a demand on our credulity.

There are three main points in the play itself which Dr. Verrall presses as indicating the need of previous information, (1) the conduct of Menelaus, who suddenly goes off, for no apparent reason, and without informing Hermione of his departure, on meeting with very slight opposition from Peleus; (2) the fact that the scene between Orestes and Hermione[1] loses much of its force if it is not realised that Neoptolemus is already dead; (3), the arrival of Orestes, which to anyone without previous knowledge of the circumstances must appear fortuitous.

(1) Menelaus was in a somewhat awkward position, being in Neoptolemus' land, interfering with his affairs, and

1. vv. 881-1047.

when confronted with Peleus, whom he must have been least anxious to meet, was no doubt glad to escape as soon as he more or less gracefully could. It is, moreover, possible that he had been brought there by Hermione, to lend weight to her position; for she did firmly intend to kill Andromache, or at least she says so,[1] though Dr. Verrall regards this as an empty threat.[2]

(2) The arrival of Orestes and his interview with Hermione does seem rather pointless without previous knowledge of the murder, but no direct mention of it could be made in this scene, since it was impossible for him to tell her that he had killed Neoptolemus until he had tested her feelings on the subject, by putting it to her as a suggestion for the future. She makes no objection to this project, and it is nowhere suggested that she has any great love for Neoptolemus; her fears are more for her own position than the loss of his affections.

v. 1004, θεῷ <u>διδόντα νῦν</u> δίκας,
might be taken as an intimation, to the audience at least (and this could be made very effective in action), that Neoptolemus was already dead, without the assumption that they knew it already from a previous play.

---

1. Andr. 161. ὧν ἐπισχήσω σ' ἐγώ,
κοὐδέν σ' ὀνήσει δῶμα Νηρῇδος τόδε,
οὐ βωμὸς οὐδὲ ναός, ἀλλὰ κατθανεῖ.

2. <u>Four Plays of Euripides</u>, p. 29. "Nor does she really intend or deliberately desire ... that even Andromache shall be put to death."

(3) Orestes knew, as he says, that Hermione was in trouble, (σύγχυσιν δόμων), and though ignorant of the fact that things had actually come to a crisis, might well have taken the opportunity to try his fortune once again.

There is yet another point which might have given the audience an inkling of the death of Neoptolemus, though to press this is to emulate Dr. Verrall in subtlety, and the scene would no doubt be sufficiently clear without it. It was a generally accepted tradition that the chorus should not make any intervention likely to change the course of the action, (whether this was due to difficulties caused by a raised stage or to any other causes), yet in this scene the chorus does so intervene, revealing to Peleus the whole plot of Orestes to kill Neoptolemus, and even specifying the proposed scene of the murder (v. 1053 foll.), a step which would vitally change the action if there was the slightest chance of that intervention having any result. Might not this possibly suggest to the audience that no warning to Neoptolemus can avail, because the murder is already accomplished?

It seems then that the objections raised by Dr. Verrall to the plot as it stands can be overruled. It is highly improbable that both a previous play and an explanatory prologue should have completely disappeared,

without any definite reference being made to either; and if Euripides had felt that his audience needed some preparatory information it would have been perfectly easy for him to embody this in the prologue, where he does not scruple to give extensive information in other cases.

The explanation of the Alcestis, given in "Euripides the Rationalist"[1] is even more fantastic. Dr. Verrall argues that Alcestis was never really dead, but that she was buried in a trance, Admetus hastening the burial to avoid the shame of publicity; an interpretation which he regards as necessitated by certain outstanding incongruities in the play, as it is generally understood. This idea is not even founded, as the chapter on "Andromache" was, on anything in the nature of external evidence, however controversial. The theory is based entirely on the hypothesis that certain features in the play are incomprehensible until it is realised that they have their point in a rationalistic treatment of the story of Alcestis: these are the Pheres-Admetus scene and the "drunkenness" of Heracles, the unseemly rapidity of the funeral and the anxiety of Admetus to keep Heracles in his own house.

The scene between Pheres and Admetus is supposed to bring out the force of Admetus' scheming to avoid a public

1. Pp. 1-128.

funeral. Both father and son feel a certain guilt at not having prevented Alcestis' self-sacrifice, and defend themselves with the greater acrimony because both know they are in the wrong. Moreover, Admetus' taunts to Pheres recoil on his own head, and the whole scene shows the attitude that he himself is likely to meet with in the citizens of Pherae. The funeral unquestionably does take place with considerable speed. The chorus, v. 77ff., come prepared to take part in the ceremony the instant that Alcestis is dead. The reason for this haste, according to Dr. Verrall, is that it makes it possible for Alcestis to have been still merely unconscious when Heracles found her. When Heracles brings her back, having wrested her soul from death by main force, he makes no mention whatever of the conflict. This Dr. Verrall takes as an intimation that there was no conflict. The theory of the trance is further supported by the behaviour of Alcestis herself in the scene before her supposed death. "Not only is her appearance unaltered, but she is able without assistance to perambulate a palace and to go through a prolonged series of fatiguing devotions and harrowing farewells."[1] The method of burial in a mortuary kiln, or tomb where the body was later consumed by fire,[2] lends itself admirably

---

1. Op.cit., p. 94.

2. See Alcestis, v. 608, πρὸς τάφον τε καὶ πυράν. and v. 740, ὡς ἂν ἐν πυρᾷ θῶμεν νεκρόν.

to the supposition that she might have been buried in a trance and later awakened. Such are the evidences upon which the interpretation rests.

The impression which it gives has been expressed by J.R. Mosley in the following words:- "In works of imagination one must not always be thinking whether the thing represented is perfectly just or natural", and again "it is the lawyer's, not the poet's point of view".[1] It must be remembered, too, that this was one of Euripides' earliest plays. Even supposing Euripides was such a thorough-going rationalist as Dr. Verrall supposes him to be, the audience cannot be expected to have known enough of his method, so early in his career, to accept or understand so complicated a piece of rationalism as this. They would have to be prepared from the outset for the portrayal of a character with which they were already familiar, in a completely unfamiliar way.

The Pheres-Admetus scene is certainly a problem, and it will have to be considered later how far the feeling of a Greek audience on the subject would differ from our own.[2] Suffice it to say here that the Alcestis was exhibited in place of a satyr-play, and may therefore be expected to have some lighter elements, of which this

1. Class. Rev. 1895, pp. 407-13.

2. In Chap. IV.

altercation may be one; that the Athenian penchant for litigation is generally admitted (though not, in this case, by Dr. Verrall), to have had considerable influence on the drama, in the introduction of scenes presenting two sides of the same question, and that the scene, whatever its faults, does help to shed a certain light on the character of Admetus.

The "drunkenness" of Heracles is very much exaggerated by Dr. Verrall. The slave was not aware that Admetus had concealed his bereavement, and consequently took a much more severe view of Heracles' conduct than the audience would, who knew the facts. This is clear from the slave's words, v. 753 οὔτι σωφρόνως ἐδέξατο
τὰ προστυχόντα ξένια, συμφορὰν μαθών,

and also v. 807 τί ζῶσιν; ἢ οὐ κάτοισθα τἀν δόμοις κακά;
Nevertheless the scene serves a very useful purpose in giving greater point to Heracles' distress when he learns the real situation, and to his determination to do what he can to make up for his conduct.

As for the speedy burial of Alcestis, both her death and her recovery by Heracles had to come into the play, and Euripides may be excused for compressing the less important features a little. Again, if we shrink from making so bold a concession to the practical exigencies

of dramatic composition, we may yet hold that burial was always more speedy in Greece, or that the victim had to be entirely given over to the power of Hades on the appointed day, a process which was not regarded as complete until after burial, for which view there is some foundation in v. 14, ἄλλον διαλλάξαντα τοῖς κάτω νεκρόν.

The mistaken sense of hospitality which caused Admetus to keep Heracles in ignorance of the true facts is quite in keeping with the whole tenour of his character. He felt, no doubt, that he had already incurred sufficient condemnation from the citizens in accepting his wife's sacrifice, and thought to redeem himself somewhat by his treatment of Heracles. Besides, had he told him the whole story he might have met with the same adverse criticism from his friend as from the general public, and Admetus is by no means noted for his moral courage.

The end of the play is, like the endings of most of the plays of Euripides, rather restrained and conventional. Heracles, being a half-divine personage, gives the scene a general effect which corresponds very much to the formal theophany with which Euripides ends so many of his plays. Heracles never, in Euripides' representation, speaks much of his own achievements. This is manifest in the Hercules Furens (though Dr. Verrall, according

to his usual method of argument from silence, takes this to show that he really had no achievements); and this was in any case no place for a long discourse on the conflict with death. Alcestis had to be restored to her husband. It does not matter to us how she got back. The great point is that she is here, and Heracles, the servant of man, subsides into the background, making way for the keen observer of human nature, who makes the final test of his friend to see if he is now worthy of the wife who has been restored to him, - and perhaps to convince her of it, too. The silence of Alcestis at the end of the play is more impressive than any amount of rapturous exclamations on her part would be.

Dr. Verrall makes much of the lack of ordinary symptoms of illness in Alcestis, and uses this to prove that there was nothing really the matter with her except a state of coma, brought on by "extreme exhaustion and mental suggestion". One would rather suppose, however, that the terror caused by the imminence of death, if it was to end in such complete prostration, would long before have prevented her from "perambulating the palace" and so forth. No normal symptoms were reasonably to be expected in so eminently abnormal a death.

Dr. Verrall's rationalistic method of interpreting Euripides, like each of the other methods which have been discussed, evidently raises as many difficulties as it solves. He explains the plays by altering them completely. He requires extraordinary acuteness in his audience; indeed even a kind of "second sight" must have been necessary for the proper appreciation of any one of the ingenious plots which he sets forth, unless we accept the existence of his hypothetical large reading public. Books were not turned out in thousands in those days as they are now; they had to be laboriously copied by hand, and were probably not very easy to obtain.

Another critic, Professor Norwood, follows Dr. Verrall very closely in the main outlines of his reasoning, but is rather more cautious in his statements. He appreciates the "astonishing brilliance and the well-nigh miraculous ingenuity with which Dr. Verrall has advanced and supported his views",[1.] but is not prepared to go quite so far himself. For instance, in his remarks on the Alcestis,[2.] he agrees in the main with Verrall's exposition, but admits that it is a tenable view that Euripides intended to treat the legend in an orthodox manner, but only partly succeeded

---

1. "Riddle of the Bacchae", p. 142.

2. "Greek Tragedy", pp. 186-192.

in attaining the brilliance of his later compositions. Dr. Verrall would never have admitted the possibility of even partial failure in Euripides.

CHAPTER III.

In order to discuss what the poet in each case really meant by his work, it is essential to have a clear idea of the nature of the audience for which his plays were written, and of the allowancesthat must be made for theatrical convention. When the plays are studied long and carefully in the printed text, it is almost inevitable, if one loses sight of these conditions, that one should become involved in questions of extreme subtlety such as Dr. Verrall raises, which, however interesting and instructive they may be from the scholar's point of view, do not help us to form any idea of the impression which the plays must have made upon the people before whom they were first produced.

It is doubtful whether more than a very small proportion of a modern audience would fully appreciate any of the plays of Euripides which Dr. Verrall has studied if they were produced according to his interpretation;[1] and a modern audience is of a very different nature and composition from the audience at the City Dionysia in fifth-century Athens. In the first place, the plays at the City Dionysia were

1. It would be extremely difficult to make Dr. Verrall's interpretation clear in production, as most of his arguments turn on small points of wording, but by a careful study of expression in speech, and by the admission of asides, it might be done.

part of a religious festival and were only performed in Athens on that one occasion, in the fifth century at least.[1] The whole of the people attended as a matter of course; there was no question of looking through a list of advertised performances and seeing what seemed most attractive or congenial to the individual theatre-goer, nor of studying critiques of the play beforehand. They knew they were to see plays based on the traditional mythology, though the details of course were unknown, and the only opportunity of seeing them was at this first and, generally speaking, only performance.[2]

The audience at the City Dionysia consisted of some 20,000 persons,[3] including the great majority of the citizen body, and also large numbers of strangers, ambassadors from foreign countries, representatives of allied states who came to pay tribute, and private individuals attracted to Athens by the fame of the festival. The plays must have been easily intelligible to these foreign visitors, or the προεδρία granted to them in the theatre would have been a very doubtful honour. But they can hardly have been expected to be conversant with anything but the broad outlines of the traditional myths, or to understand deep or

---

1. They might be repeated at country festivals, e.g., at the Piraeus.

2. Unless anyone visited the performances in other places, which was probably not a common practice.

3. See Haigh Attic Theatre, Ch. VII.

subtle allusions to contemporary affairs in Athens. Indeed, if we may accept the authority of Aristotle, a large part of the Athenian section of the audience was itself unfamiliar with the ordinary details of mythology,[1] – ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ γνώριμα ὀλίγοις γνώριμά ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ὅμως εὐφραίνει πάντας.

This great audience, drawn from all classes of the people, must have contained a large proportion of ignorant and uncultured citizens, and though the keen and rapid intellect of the Athenian people is undoubtedly a fact, it seems to have been somewhat exaggerated by those who wished to uphold a complicated theory of interpretation. Approval and disapproval were strongly expressed; if the audience wished they could hiss a play off the stage and go on to the rest, and the judges were no doubt guided to some extent by the preferences shown by the people, especially as they might later be tried by the people for giving an unfair judgment. We may take it then that the positions gained by the plays represent more or less the general impression which they made at the time of their production, and if a play is characterised as "one of the second-rate plays" (pace Dr. Verrall), we need not look in it for any wonderful elaboration of plot or subtle significance of language such as he found in the Andromache.

We must imagine, then, a mixed audience, keenly interested in the plays which passed before them, ready to

---

1. Poetics 1451 b.25.

express violent disapproval of any sentiments which offended them and, in the main, extremely orthodox with regard to the national religion, as is shown by the impeachment of Aeschylus for revealing the Mysteries. Such an audience was likely to take the poet at his word, and if he said Alcestis was dead, to believe that she was dead, especially as the very mention of Alcestis must have brought this idea first before their minds.

Moreover, such an audience would be tolerant of many incongruities caused by the difficulty of production which the more spoiled modern audience would not endure. If Shakespeare's audience were prepared to have the dead bodies at the end of Hamlet, for instance, get up and walk off, and if even we are not satisfied until we see the slain villain take his call before the curtain with the survivors, why should we not concede at least a similar tolerance to the audiences of the City Dionysia?

There was no curtain in the fifth-century theatre; any characters who were on the stage at the opening of the play had to take up their position in full view of the audience, presumably even Orestes, who had been lying ill on his couch for five days. Then, again, everything had to happen in broad daylight, even though the play required it to be dark. For instance, the whole action of the

Rhesus takes place in the night, and a great deal of the Cyclops also, but no attempt was made to represent this in the theatre, simply because in an open air theatre it was impossible. If one of the characters apostrophised the heavenly bodies, the audience would not be dissatisfied because they could not see them. If it were necessary for the ghost of Darius to appear both in full daylight and before thirteen people, it did so, even though it thereby violated "two provisions in the standard code of ghostly etiquette"[1].

It is fundamentally unnatural for the whole action of a play to take place out of doors, (the eccyclema cannot properly be regarded as an interior scene), especially right in front of the palace or other building wherein it should have passed, but it is essential to the production of a play in the Greek theatre and is therefore accepted without question. Similarly it is unreasonable for two people to go out and come in through the same door within a few seconds without meeting one another, but they undoubtedly do so in Greek tragedy. For example, in the Alcestis, Heracles goes out to the grave just as Admetus returns, but they have evidently not met, and the audience accepts the fact. After all, it is very easy to ignore

---

1. Flickinger, <u>Greek Theatre</u>, p. 226.

improbabilities when they are not definitely represented on the stage. If Heracles and Admetus passed on the stage without seeing one another the audience would, no doubt, feel it too great a demand on their credulity; but once they are behind the back-scene we are no longer concerned with their doings, except such as they choose to announce on their return. Aristotle lays down in his Poetics the rule that if there is any improbability or inconsistency it should be outside the play,[1] and the same holds good of the minor improbabilities of production -- if they are outside the immediate action they pass unnoticed.

There are many examples in the extant plays of incongruities of time. One of these, that at the beginning of the Agamemnon, Dr. Verrall takes as the basis of a complicated theory about the plot, which shall be considered later, but there are other inconsistencies just as flagrant which have not been similarly explained, and which do not admit of such an explanation. For instance, in the Eumenides the change from Delphi to the Acropolis of Athens requires a lapse of time sufficient for a journey of eighty miles or so, but the action is all but continuous; in the

---

1. Poetics, 1460 a. 27. τούς τε λόγους (δεῖ) μὴ συνίστασθαι ἐκ μερῶν ἀλόγων, ἀλλὰ μάλιστα μὲν μηδὲν ἔχειν ἄλογον, εἰ δὲ μή, ἔξω τοῦ μυθεύματος.

Supplices of Euripides am army marches from Eleusis to Thebes and fights a battle, news of which is brought back within the space of thirty-six lines after their departure;[1] and in the Trachiniae the news of the effect of the poisoned robe comes at v. 734, while Heracles himself arrives at v. 970. It is evident from these examples that if two events naturally separated by a considerable lapse of time had to be brought into one play, they were introduced by the poet without apology, and that the intervening period, being outside the actual representation, was ignored. In the present day we indicate these lapses of time on a printed programme, but if we write "Scene II - 6 months later", the six months have no more elapsed than if we put in a choral ode and left them to the imagination, though it is undoubtedly useful to be told the exact period. It is unnecessary, therefore, and detrimental to the understanding of the plays to attempt to explain away every little discrepancy, either of time or of any other nature, by seeing behind it some deep design on the part of the poet, which could never have been appreciated by an audience such as that which attended the Athenian performances in the fifth century B.C.

The difficulties and complications of any such undertaking may be illustrated by an examination of the various

1. Supp. 598 - 634.

theories which have been put forward to explain the plot of the Agamemnon, and especially that of Dr. Verrall.

If one starts with the assumption that the plot must be in every respect consistent and within the bounds of possibility, the Agamemnon presents very considerable difficulties. In the first place, the arrival of Agamemnon immediately after the receipt of the beacon message appears a practical impossibility, indeed, the whole beacon story, told with such circumstance, is highly improbable, since at least one of the stages is about a hundred miles long. Secondly, Aegistheus, at the end of the play, arriving after everything is done and having had no obvious part in the murder, boasts that he devised the whole conspiracy.[1]

κἀγὼ δίκαιος τοῦδε τοῦ φόνου ῥαφεύς.
--- καὶ τοῦδε τἀνδρὸς ἡψάμην θυραῖος ὤν,
πᾶσαν συνάψας μηχανὴν δυσβουλίας.

Dr. Verrall, unable to accept any incongruity so serious as these attempts to solve the problem by introducing a political conspiracy in the Argolid, and assigning certain lines, which are generally given to the chorus or older persons, to a representative of the disaffected body, whom he names "conspirator". Aegistheus is supposed to have stirred up this conspiracy against Agamemnon during the

---

1. vv. 1604, 1608-9.

latter's absence, and, on perceiving his approach, to have lighted the beacon on Mt. Arachnaeus to warn Clytaemnestra and give her time to prepare for her husband's arrival. The watchman, stationed on the roof for the past year, that is, since the conspiracy became established, had been told, in order to avert suspicion, that the lighting of the beacon would indicate the fall of Troy, a story which Clytaemnestra, of course, supports in the conversation with the chorus. The conspirators help her out in her deception by interposing favourable comments at suitable points. For instance, the lines

τοιόσδ' ὁ κόμπος, τῆς ἀληθείας γέμων
οὐκ αἰσχρὸς ὡς γυναικὶ γενναίᾳ λακεῖν.

are taken as a comment of the hypothetical conspirator.[1]

The evidence on which the insertion of a fourth speaker in a small part, which this theory necessitates, is based ~~on~~ is a note of Pollux, ὁπότε μὴν ἀντὶ τετάρτου ὑποκριτοῦ δέοι τινὰ τῶν χορευτῶν εἰπεῖν ἐν ᾠδῇ, παρασκήνιον καλεῖται τὸ πρᾶγμα, ὡς ἐν Ἀγαμέμνονι Αἰσχύλου.[2] This note does at first seem to afford a certain support to Dr. Verrall's theory; nevertheless the speaker of lines such as those quoted above could not be said εἰπεῖν ἐν ᾠδῇ. There is, moreover, a possibility that the writer was not referring to

1. These lines are generally assigned either to the chorus or to Clytaemnestra herself. The latter arrangement seems the most satisfactory, the lines being thus a half-excuse for her former words.

2. Quoted by Verrall in Class Rev. 1890, p. 3.

the Agememnon alone, but to the whole of the trilogy, and was thinking of the small part of Pylades in the Choephoroi;[1] though Pylades, in the present arrangement of the parts is a mute character. Possibly at some earlier date some of the lines in the long κόμμος at the tomb of Agamemnon were assigned to Pylades instead of to the chorus. In any case, the evidence given by this note is at best very slender, as no passage from the play in question can be identified which fits the description ἐν ᾠδῇ .

In all the other plays of Aeschylus even the third actor is very sparingly used, and it does not seem likely that he should have brought in a fourth person to speak what is a quite distinct and, if Verrall's hypothesis were correct, important part, though he might possibly require an extra speaker on rare occasions, - if, for instance, at any point two sides of the tritagonist clashed.

Another elaborate theory has been brought forward by E.S. Hoernle[2] to explain why Agamemnon arrived on the morning after the beacons were seen. He takes the view that Agamemnon deliberately delayed his message until he himself was on the point of returning, suspecting the existence of some plot against him, or hearing of it from some of the more loyal of his subjects, and that the storm, which

---

1. Aristophanes,Frogs,1124-8, quotes the opening lines of the Choephoroi as the beginning of the Oresteia; the names of the trilogy and of its component plays were evidently interchangeable.

2. The Problem of the Agamemnon, 1921.

hindered its transmission still further, hastened his ship on. Aegistheus had planned the murder, and would have executed it himself had not Agamemnon's premature arrival and the provocation of Cassandra's presence determined Clytaemnestra to take immediate action. To this argument Dr. Verrall makes the reasonable objection that it would be impossible for Agamemnon to delay such news for any considerable length of time.

Both Verrall's and Hoernle's theories, however, ask too much of the audience. Plots of this kind are completely alien to the spirit of Aeschylus, who kept always to broad and general outlines. It is inconceivable that he should have made the first play of a trilogy so obscure as the Agamemnon, as these critics imagine it, must inevitably be. It is, in fact, extremely probable that discrepancies of time such as are involved in the arrival of Agamemnon,[1.] or improbabilities like the message of the beacons, would pass as unnoticed by an Athenian audience as they undoubtedly do in the performances at Bradfield College to-day, at least by those who have not previously studied the question. The beacon passage is too fine in itself for the listeners to count up the miles as it goes on; the general direction is perfectly correct, there were no accurate maps of the

---

1. Vide. Chap. V., for discussion of the Unities in Aristotle.

Mediterranean at that time, and, it must once more be urged, the plays were written for performance and not for dissection.

A very interesting attempt has, however, been made to justify the beacon passage by emendation; and this is worthy of mention even though any justification beyond the undeniable beauty of the passage and its general verisimilitude may be thought unnecessary. It is set forth in an article entitled "The Geography of the Beacon Passage", by W.M. Calder, which appears in Class. Rev. 1922, p. 155. The general outlines are as follows:- The route described lies throughout in territory controlled by the Athenian navy, and is precisely the line that would be chosen for such a series of signalling stations. The beacon chain is therefore an anachronisn, in the legendary antiquity of the Oresteian story, but credible to a fifth-century audience, since Herodotus and Thucydides prove that the Greeks of this period knew the art of fire-signals;[1] also a similar system of fire-signals was known in the Byzantine period, with intervals of from 45 to 60 miles.[2] According to this evidence all the stages in the Aeschylean beacon-chain are feasible except that from Athos to Euboea, and at this point there is, by almost universal consent, a break in

1. Cf. Herod. VII, 182, IX, 3; Thus. II, 94, III, 22, 80.

2. See Calder, C.R. 22, p. 157. "The evidence for this beacon route will be found in Ramsay's 'Historical Geography of Asia Minor', pp. 352, 187, 20 (in this order)."

the construction, and probably a lacuna in the text. The supplied line must "reintroduce the lost station, provide ἰσχὺς with a verb which carries the signal to the lost station, furnish παραγγείλασα with a principal verb to which it stands in the ordinary temporal relation, and justify the article before χρυσοφεγγές". The line suggested by Mr. Calder is Ἴκῳ προσῇξεν, ἔνθεν οὐρανίζετο. With this addition the passage runs as follows:-

μέγαν δὲ πανὸν ἐκ νήσου τρίτον
Ἄθῳον αἶπος Ζηνὸς ἐξεδέξατο,
ὑπερτελής τε, πόντον ὥστε νωτίσαι,
ἰσχὺς πορευτοῦ λαμπάδος πρὸς ἡδονὴν
<Ἴκῳ προσῇξεν, ἔνθεν οὐρανίζετο>
πεύκη, τὸ χρυσοφεγγές, ὥς τις ἥλιος,
σέλας παραγγείλασα Μακίστου σκοπαῖς.

i.e., "sped joyously to Icus, whence the pine-glare soared to heaven, but not until it had passed on its beam of radiant gold to Makistos' watch" (Calder).

Icus meets the geographical requirements of the passage quite satisfactorily, being one of the group of islands off the coast of Magnesia in Thessaly, near Peparethus. The correction is, of course, entirely conjectural, but gives an instance of the kind of way in which the passage might be restored.

The incredulity of the chorus does not help Dr. Verrall's theory that the beacon-chain was not authentic: vv. 318-9,

λόγους δ' ἀκοῦσαι τούσδε κἀποθαυμάσαι
διηνεκῶς θέλοιμ' ἂν ὡς λέγοις πάλιν,

refer to the message itself, not the means of its transmission. After the ten weary years of the Trojan war they were not likely to trust too rashly to a rumour of the end: the watchman could only have seen a gleam in the sky, for which he had watched throughout a whole year, and might perhaps be mistaken, they thought; perhaps the fire was due to some accident or other cause.

There remains only the strange boast of Aegistheus that he had framed the entire plot.[1] The whole story of the house of Atreus which Aegistheus tells at this point is in keeping with Aeschylus' basic idea of an ancestral curse descending from generation to generation. Aegistheus was in reality the cause of Agamemnon's death; it was through him that retribution descended, though not by his own hand, for it was undoubtedly his influence that turned Clytaemnestra against her husband in the first place. As he himself observes,

καὶ τοῦδε τἀνδρὸς ἡψάμην θυραῖος ὤν,
πᾶσαν συνάψας μηχανὴν δυσβουλίας.

---

1. vv. 1608-9.

"and I have set my hand to this man, though far away; I linked together all this chain of treachery". Surely this expresses the spirit of Aeschylus more nearly than any interpretation which makes Aegistheus the centre of a political conspiracy. Thus when the chorus ask

τί δὴ τὸν ἄνδρα τόνδ' ἀπὸ ψυχῆς κακῆς
οὐκ αὐτὸς ἠνάριζες, ἀλλὰ σὺν γυνή...; [1]

a question which he has already sufficiently answered in vv. 1636-7, (τὸ γὰρ δολῶσαι πρὸς γυναικὸς ἦν σαφῶς·
ἐγὼ δ' ὕποπτος ἐχθρὸς ἦ παλαιγενής.)
he despairs of making them understand his true position, but proceeds at least to vindicate his courage by a general challenge.

The outraged motherhood of Clytaemnestra makes her a suitable channel for the vengeance, ὁ παλαιὸς δριμὺς ἀλάστωρ, that comes by way of Aegistheus upon the house of ~~Athens~~ Atreus.

---

1. vv. 1643, 4.

CHAPTER IV.

"It is a fundamental law in the criticism of Greek Tragedy .... that we must ponder it until we find some central thought which accounts for the whole action, and for the perspective in which the details are placed."[1]

It would be hard to find a more apt motto for those theorists who, in the attempt to substantiate their own views, mar the appreciation of the plays by introducing into them subtleties that are utterly incompatible with the conditions under which they were originally performed, and which are suitable rather for a reading public than for a dramatic exhibition. We have seen to what results such "ponderings" lead in the case of Dr. Verrall. It now remains to consider the matter in another aspect.

In the endeavour to appreciate any plays belonging to so remote a period as the Attic tragedies, imagination is undoubtedly necessary; not that imagination which is exercised in working out some preconceived idea, often at the cost of great straining of the text, but the imagination which enables us to realise what effect the plays themselves must have presented to the audience before whom they were

1. G. Norwood, "Greek Tragedy", p. 155.

originally produced. Without definite evidence to the contrary we have, it seems, no alternative but to suppose that the plays mean what they appear to mean; that is to say, what they would, to a fifth-century audience, have appeared to mean. This does not necessarily correspond with the impression they would make on a modern audience, for many things which seem strange to us would in all probability have been perfectly natural to them.

We cannot draw any certain inferences from fragmentary passages of lost plays which may have survived, for the apparent meaning of a fragment is often completely different from that which it presents when seen in its context. All conclusions drawn from the fragments must therefore remain under suspicion until more is known of the circumstances peculiar to each. Parody must be viewed with equal caution, for one of its main arts lies in removing words and phrases from their context in order to attribute particular sentiments to the poet.

The theories of origin have been set aside as giving no help in the general appreciation of the plays, and the rationalistic system of explanation has also been abandoned on account of its excessive subtlety. It now remains to turn to the plays themselves and consider how far some points which have been regarded as difficult of understanding

may be explained by a recognition of certain outstanding differences of thought and feeling between the people of the fifth century B.C. and the present day, and of the effect the plays must have presented to those before whom they were first performed.

Evidence is not lacking for such differences. The two most outstanding points on which they occur are the importance of due burial rites, and family relations. A proper appreciation of these points is of the utmost importance, since by a lack of it the reader is led into condemnation of certain scenes and a feeling of bewilderment about others, which were all no doubt highly satisfactory to the people for whom they were written, while the due recognition of such differences makes it possible to explain many points of difficulty.

The great stress laid on the proper performance of the customary burial rites, τὰ νομιζόμενα, was probably in the first place due to the feeling that without them the soul was debarred from entering Hades, and remained in an intermediate state as a ghost. In Homer we find in one passage[1] definite reference to this belief. It was considered the greatest injury one man could do another to refuse him burial after death. This feeling is illustrated

---

1. Iliad Ψ. 71. θάπτέ με ὅττι τάχιστα· πύλας Ἀΐδαο περήσω, κ.τ.λ.

in various passages in the Attic orators, the branch of literature which, with the drama, reflects most clearly the spirit of the times. For example, Isoc. Panath § 169:-[1]
ἐδεῖτο μὴ περιιδεῖν τοιούτους ἄνδρας ἀτάφους γενομένους μηδὲ παλαιὸν ἔθος καὶ πάτριον νόμον καταλυόμενον, ᾧ πάντες ἄνθρωποι χρώμενοι διατελοῦσιν οὐχ ὡς ὑπ᾽ ἀνθρωπίνης κειμένῳ φύσεως ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ὑπὸ δαιμονίας προστεταγμένῳ δυνάμεως.

It was considered a "sacred and imperative duty to cover with earth a human corpse", see Pausanias i, 32, 5,[2] which was not refused even to enemies — <u>id</u>. ix, 32, 9[3] — and this duty would be expected even of strangers, should the proper celebrants be unavailable. Isocrates, Plataeans, §416, shows how terrible it was thought to deprive anyone or to be deprived, of burial — ἔστι δ᾽ οὐκ ἴσον κακὸν οὐδ᾽ ὅμοιον τοὺς τεθνεῶτας ταφῆς εἴργεσθαι καὶ τοὺς ζῶντας πατρίδος ἀποστερεῖσθαι καὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀγαθῶν ἁπάντων, ἀλλὰ τὸ μὲν δεινότερον τοῖς κωλύουσιν ἢ τοῖς ἀτυχοῦσιν —.
Similarly Plato, Hipp.Maj. 291, refers to the desire generally felt for a suitable funeral — λέγω τοίνυν, ἀεὶ καὶ παντί, καὶ πανταχοῦ κάλλιστον εἶναι ἀνδρὶ πλουτοῦντι ... ὑπὸ τῶν αὑτοῦ ἐκγόνων καλῶς καὶ μεγαλοπρεπῶς ταφῆναι.

---

1. Cf. also Lysias Epit. §7, and Aeschines κατ. Τιμ. §14.
2. ὡς πάντως ὅσιον ἀνθρώπου νεκρὸν γῇ κρύψαι.
3. ... ἄλλα δὲ τοσαῦτα ὀνείδη· Φιλοκλέα γὰρ καὶ ... Ἀθηναίων ... τετρακισχιλίους ... ἀπέκτεινεν ... καὶ σφίσιν οὐδὲ ἀποθανοῦσιν ἐπήνεγκε γῆν.

It is evident that the subject was one of such paramount importance to the Greek mind that we need not be surprised at the great stress laid on it in many of the extant tragedies, even though the question of burial is given more lengthy treatment and suffers more heated discussion than we feel is justifiable in proportion to the other events of the play. In some cases, such as the Supplices of Euripides, the whole action is based on the topic of burial, but there are one or two plays in which certain scenes have been frequently condemned because of what seemed to the critic the undue prominence given to this question.

Sophocles' Ajax is a clear example of the influence which such an idea may have upon the construction of a play. In the <u>Classical Review</u> of 1911,[1] Mr. A. Platt brought forward a theory to explain why, after the death of the hero, the play still goes on for over 500 lines, in the dispute about the burial. His explanation is based on the assumption that the last scene cannot be regarded as other than an anticlimax. In most of Sophocles' plays, he says, a more or less subordinate character appears in the earlier and later scenes, while absent from the central, to frame and act as a foil to the main character. The cool and sensible attitude of Odysseus brings out more clearly the pride and foolish impetuosity of Ajax, and for this reason he is brought in again at the end of the play.

---

1. Page 101.

Now, in the first place, it is extremely unlikely that Sophocles should have allowed an element of the play which existed merely as a foil to the main action to encroach to such an extent on the space allotted to the whole; 500 lines out of 1420, more than one-third of the whole play, is an unwarranted proportion for such a scene. The real point is, as Professor Jebb remarks, that "the true climax of the play is not the death of Ajax, but the decision that he shall be buried".[1] He, however, bases this view on the fact that Ajax was a hero, with rites and offerings of his own, and that therefore he must appear at the end as a fitting recipient of the honours generally paid to him. Ajax was indeed a hero in a religious sense, but had he not been so the final scenes would have been equally appropriate. The whole question turns on the importance of proper burial as a vindication of Ajax' honour; the very possibility of his not receiving it is sufficient to keep up the tragic interest to the end of the play, and it is unnecessary to suppose any underlying motive for the scene such as Mr. Platt suggests. To a modern audience the "action", that is to say the excitement, probably closes with the death of Ajax, but it is inconceivable that this should have been the case in the fifth century B.C., when the proper performance of burial rites far outweighed the

1. Ajax. Intr. p. xxxii.

~~the~~ other circumstances of death, and the greatest possible injury one man could do another was to refuse him these funeral honours.

Theories such as Mr. Platt's presuppose a variety of "second sight" in the audience. It must be remembered that the play was in most cases performed once only, at any rate in the city, that there is little evidence for an extensive reading public at that time, and that therefore the play must have been clear and intelligible as it went along. Imagine an audience listening to 500 lines of a play, and presumably waiting for the next event, before realising that all this was only meant to be a foil to the character of the hero, whose fortunes were long ago concluded! Granted that the Athenian public were possessed of an extremely fine aesthetic sense and great powers of appreciating literary beauty, still there is nothing in these scenes sufficiently beautiful to be its own justification. There seems to be no alternative but to admit either that the end of the play is lacking in artistic merit, or that the interest remains alive until the close, through the peculiar attitude of the Greek mind to the value of the customary forms of burial. The scholiast maintains τοιαῦτα σοφίσματα οὐκ οἰκεῖα τραγῳδίας, but this is not contemporary evidence. Haigh's objection[1]

1. Tragic Drama of the Greeks, p. 188.

to the scene is "the excessive length of the concluding dialogues". However, in a matter of vital interest an Athenian audience would have had no objection to a little rhetorical display, in which, indeed, they delighted. It seems, therefore, that the difficulty of the Ajax may be solved by taking into consideration one of the predominant characteristics of contemporary Greek thought; and it will be seen that others also will admit of similar treatment.

The Septem of Aeschylus has been suspected by many critics, including Wilamovitz-Moellendorf,[1] of containing interpolation in its later scenes. The suspected portion is that from v. 1004 onwards, up to this point there has been no suggestion that Polyneices will not receive precisely the same honours as Eteocles, the defender of the city. Then suddenly comes the decision of the people, and Antigone's resolve to bury her brother, even against their will. This ending Wilamovitz-Moellendorf regards as spurious - "der unechte Schluss", "der Inhalt des Dramas schliesst diesen Akt aus".[2] He feels that the play should finish with the burial of both, and that the last episode is therefore unnecessary. The suddenness of the decision, in his opinion, tells against the passage, "Seine Verwandten sollen ihm nicht das letzte Geleit geben. Wozu hatte man ihm dem erst hereingebracht"?[3]

1. Aischylos-Interpretationen, 1914.

2. P. 88.

3. P. 89.

The suggested explanation is that this last episode was imitated from the Antigone of Sophocles.

The play was the third of a trilogy, Laius, Oedipus and Septem, produced in 467 B.C., at least twenty-five years before the Antigone of Sophocles. There is no evidence of interpolation in the language of the scene; moreover the story itself is different, the decree being passed by the δήμου πρόβουλοι in Aeschylus' play, not by a new king. There is nowhere any mention of Creon. It is unlikely that anyone imitating the Antigone of Sophocles should have been careful enough to strike the democratic note[1] suitable to an Aeschylean play by this change. Assuming then that the evidence for interpolation is insufficient, the story of Antigone's resolve is squeezed into the play at the last moment in a rather inartistic manner. Aeschylus might have broken off at v. 1004 with the burial of the two brothers, though the play would then have been a little short in comparison with his other works;[2] but the story of Antigone was part of a well-known legend, and could hardly have been omitted, especially in a trilogy, which usually ~~contains~~ comprises a complete history of some house, or a self-contained part of it.

1. It is evident from other plays of Aeschylus that he shared in the universal hatred of tyrants, cf. Persae 242. Suppl. 699, 398, 365 ff. See Haigh, Tragic Drama of the Greeks, p. 55, where the idea of Aeschylus' objection to popular forms of government is refuted.

2. Only the Eumenides is shorter, 999 lines. The other plays are as follows:- P.V.1114, Persae 1054, Supplices 1056, Agam. 1651, Choeph. 1065.

The objection that the decision against Polyneices' burial is too sudden has little weight. There has been no opportunity in the play up to this point for the suggestion that it might be refused, for up to v. 1004 we have only heard the opinions of the sisters, who naturally feel for both equally, and of the chorus, which expresses no opinion either way. To the audience the decision would not be surprising, even supposing they were not previously acquainted with the story, for it was not really likely that the man who had attacked his native city should receive the same honours as its defender.

Once this decree had been announced, as it inevitably had to be, the episode of Antigone's resolve to bury Polyneices followed naturally. The curse of Oedipus had declared that the brothers should divide their inheritance with the sword so as to obtain equal shares. The Greek mind would not regard this prophecy as fulfilled unless each received equal burial honours. It seems as though there was really too much of the story left to get into the play,[1] but by means of Antigone's confidence and the joint exit of the two bands of mourners Aeschylus suggests sufficiently the subsequent accomplishment of her aim. Once more the importance in Greek eyes of proper burial

---

1. It is evident from Aristotle's injunction, Poetics 1456 a. 10ff., Χρὴ -- μὴ ποιεῖν ἐποποιικὸν σύστημα τραγωδίαν, that people frequently did try to put too much into a tragedy.

explains a generally recognised difficulty without recourse to theories of interpolation, which are generally based on shaky foundations, unless there is some very obvious difference in language or metre.

A third play in which the importance of burial rites stands out is, of course, Sophocles' Antigone. Here, however, the situation is complicated by the conflict between two other ruling factors of Greek thought, loyalty to the state and a strong feeling of the ties of kinship, a conflict which also appears at the end of the Septem. Loyalty to the state and to the family was equally imperative, and the play is one of the most powerful works of Sophocles that we have, simply because he brings into conflict these two aspects of duty in such a way as to show the natural ties of the family triumphing over the obligations of citizenship. The dilemma does not seem nearly so terrible to us now as it must have been to the original audience, because neither bond carries so much weight with us. We can, however, realise more or less the feelings of the heroine until we come to her remarkable assertion in vv. 905-7,

οὐ γὰρ ποτ' οὔτ' ἂν εἰ τέκνων μήτηρ ἔφυν
οὔτ' εἰ πόσις μοι κατθανὼν ἐτήκετο,
βίᾳ πολιτῶν τόνδ' ἂν ᾐρόμην πόνον.

Objection has been made to these lines on the ground that εἰ τέκνων μήτηρ ἔφυν does not mean "if my children had died", but in conjunction with the following lines this sense can surely be understood - "if I were in this position as a mother or a wife".

Many scholars wish to reject this passage as an interpolation, some discarding more lines, some less,[1] the greatest cut being made by Dindorf, who rejects vv. 900-928 as an interpolation. Being unable to understand the sentiments expressed in these lines, which from the modern point of view are without doubt exceedingly strange, these critics found their theory of interpolation on the similar passage in Herodotus, iii, 119, from which they declare the words to have been copied. This passage reads as follows:- ἡ δ' ἀμείβετο τοισίδε· Ὦ βασιλεῦ, ἀνὴρ μέν μοι ἂν ἄλλος γένοιτο, εἰ δαίμων ἐθέλοι, καὶ τέκνα ἄλλα, εἰ ταῦτα ἀποβάλοιμι· πατρὸς δὲ καὶ μητρὸς οὐκέτι μευ ζωόντων ἀδελφεὸς ἂν ἄλλος οὐδενὶ τρόπῳ γένοιτο· ταύτῃ τῇ γνώμῃ χρεωμένη ἔλεξα ταῦτα.

Curious parallels are quoted in the commentary by How and Wells (1912), p. 294, from the Indian epic, the Ramayana, and a late Persian story.

Some think that the passage was inserted by Sophocles' son, Iophon, but this seems extremely unlikely. If the

---

1. E.g., Jebb, 904-920; Schneidewin, 905-13; Wecklein and Nauck, 904-920; Kvíčala, 905-912.

sentiments expressed were sufficiently popular to justify the insertion so soon after the play was written, why should not Sophocles have written the words himself?

The passage certainly stood thus in the text with which Aristotle was familiar, for he refers to it in Rhet. iii. 16. 9.[1] Moreover, Plutarch, De fratern. amor. § 481E, repeats the same sentiment: ἀδελφοῦ δ' ἀντίκτησις οὐκ ἔστιν --- ἀλλ' ὀρθῶς ἡ Περσὶς εἶπεν, ἀντὶ τῶν τέκνων ἑλομένη σῶσαι τὸν ἀδελφόν, ὅτι παῖδας μὲν ἑτέρους κτήσασθαι δύναιτ' ἄν, ἀδελφὸν δ' ἄλλος αὐτῇ, γονέων μὴ ὄντων, οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο. Evidently the idea was not so strange to the Greek mind as we have been led to believe.

In the Classical Review for 1918 (p. 141), Mr. J.J. Murphy proposed to solve the problem by emendation. He was not willing to admit the interpolation theory, but could not all the same accept the sentiments as they stood. He therefore suggested reading the letters ουταν in v.904 as οὔ τἂν (= τοι ἂν), rather than οὔτ' ἄν. The latter reading he supposes to be due to the οὔτ' εἰ in the following line, which led the editor or reviser to read the letters in this way. With this alteration the passage reads: "For never, no never, had I been the mother of children - not if it were my husband that lay mouldering in death - would I have taken on myself this labour in defiance of the citizens." This, if we consider the

---

1. ὥσπερ Σοφοκλῆς ποιεῖ παράδειγμα τὸ ἐκ τῆς Ἀντιγόνης...
μητρὸς δ' ἐν Ἅιδου καὶ πατρὸς βεβηκότων,
οὐκ ἔστ' ἀδελφὸς ὅς τις ἂν βλάστοι ποτέ.

English version alone, gives a reasonable sense, - though the remark strikes one as a little unnecessary; but from the point of view of syntax it is unsatisfactory. The supposed falsifier of the text was quite right in looking for a preceding οὔτε to balance that at the beginning of v. 906; for οὔτε here would naturally mean "nor". Mr. Murphy's version would require οὐδ' εἰ πόσις κ.τ.λ.

Another suggestion is that of G. Kaibel in his treatise de Sophoclis Antigone (1897). He feels that the "husband and children" passage was directed against Creon, whose son Haemon she was to have married. But such a remark as "I would not have done it for your son" would be quite out of keeping with the dignified note of this speech as a whole.[1] In a later passage, however, the same writer remarks "nemo aegre feret quod Sophocles de iuris gentilicii natura explicatius dicere noluit: neque decebat hoc poetam neque opus erat Graecis scilicet audientibus, quibus Antigonae cogitandi ratio familiaris erat". This seems to be the point on which the whole matter turns, and had Kaibel made full use of it his own hypothesis would have been superfluous.

The Antigone has often been regarded as an exposition of the conflict between the ties of kin and those of

---

1. Op.cit., p. 20.

citizenship. Had Antigone been upholding the law of the gods, Teiresias ought to have supported her, "ita quidem ut deorum vindex virgo iniusto supplicio liberaretur"[1], which he is far from doing, though he deprecates to a certain extent the harshness of Creon's sentence.

On the assumption that the passage as it stands is correct and that it must be explicable in itself, we must turn once more to the essential difference of outlook of the Athenian audience from ourselves. In the first place refusal of burial, as we have seen before, was a most terrible wrong. Antigone was therefore bound at least formally to bury any corpse, and in particular that of her own brother. Moreover, the family must be upheld at all costs. Creon had usurped the position of her family, and must not be permitted to exercise jurisdiction in a case where her own instinct led her so clearly. In a patriarchal community a brother is more closely related to a woman than a husband or children would be, since the latter belong to a new stock. This feeling is at the back of Antigone's words. The passage gives the impression that if it were not for this family bond she would regard herself justified in pleading the king's commands as an excuse for neglecting the rites; the tragedy of her position is that this is the one relation for whom she must disregard the edict and make

---

1. Ibid., p. 21.

the attempt. The so-called harshness of Antigone's character is probably to be explained by the fact that she is clearly aware of the magnitude of her sacrifice, and feels its hardness.

With regard to the Alcestis of Euripides it is difficult to speak with any certainty, because the fact that it was performed fourth in the series, i.e., in the place usually occupied by a satyr-play, removes it somewhat from the province of tragedy; but it seems at least possible that here too we have an instance of the influence of contemporary ideas. Most critics agree with Haigh that the substitution for a satyric drama accounts for the peculiar tone of the play; but this would hardly seem to justify the juxtaposition of pure tragedy and pure burlesque which the play appears to present, if we regard the Pheres-Admetus scene as wildly impossible and entirely ludicrous. The only complete extant satyr-play, the Cyclops, presents no such violent contrast. H. Weil, in his edition of the Alcestis, says[1] "de là vient le caractère mixte de cette pièce, qui occupe une place à part dans ce qui nous reste du theâtre grec". Later, however, he adds[2] "d'un autre côté, l'homme est le chef de la famille: sa vie était regardée comme quelque chose d'infiniment plus précieux que la vie de la femme". This, as far as it goes, was evidently a familiar

1. Introduction, p. 2.

2. Ibid., p. 4.

idea to the Greeks of that time, cf. Iph. Aul. 1394,

Εἷς γ' ἀνὴρ κρείσσων γυναικῶν μυρίων ὁρᾶν φάος.

Sittl (Gr. Lit. III, p. 324), explains the situation by the fact that the Greeks set an exceptionally low value on the lives of women and old men. No one, however, seems to have observed that the very argument with which Weil seeks to justify Admetus "l'homme est le chef de la famille" might be equally well applied in vindication of Pheres' attitude. The sacrifice would not normally be expected of him, as he himself remarks, v. 683:-

οὐ γὰρ πατρῷον τόνδ' ἐδεξάμην νόμον
παίδων προθνήσκειν πατέρας, οὐδ' Ἑλληνικόν.

He is, while he lives, still the head of the family, though Admetus is doubtless the head of his own subsidiary family. Both, therefore, have a good claim to survive, and this seems to be the point of the whole scene. The Athenian people loved a discussion of any kind, especially one that had two good sides to it. The teaching of the sophists, and the exercises in the schools of rhetoric fostered this liking, which was at its height at the time when Euripides wrote. The arguments on either side have sufficient grounds, to the Athenian mind, if not to ours, to keep the scene out of the realm of pure comedy, and to make it endurable in the context. The deplorable feature is not so much the arguments used as the undignified way in which

father and son rail at each other;and even this, at such a time, can be excused.

Various attempts have been made to explain this play as a representation of a sun or year myth. Dr. Albin Lesky[1] records the most important of these, but to all the same objection applies: how could the audience, without being forewarned, realise the meaning of such a story on the spot? No doubt many of the myths did have their foundations in some such system of personification, which is natural to a very early stage of intelligence, but we must surely beware of imagining the people of the fifth century B.C. as conscious of the ultimate source of the stories in which they delighted. No one in the present day, except perhaps a few who have studied such aspects of mythology, would realise, or even desire to realise, the application to natural phenomena of the story of Balder the Beautiful.

In any case these theories have little bearing on the solving of the principal difficulty in the play, since Pheres features in none of them. Taking into consideration not only that the Alcestis was performed in place of a satyr-play, but also that the Athenians had a natural liking for rhetorical disputations, and held such views as they did on the inferior value of the lives of women and old people, it appears that the scene would seem to them sufficiently natural.

---

1. Alcestis, der Mythus und das Drama, 1925.

Such are some of the differences of attitude between the Athenians and ourselves which we are apt to ignore: but there is another difference which we are equally inclined to exaggerate, namely the desire for a rigid adherence to the "unities", and to actual probability, which will be dealt with in the following chapter.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER IV.

The Ion of Euripides and the Trachiniae of Sophocles present instances of the influence upon the drama of contemporary ideas differing from our own, which do not appear to have been previously noted in this connection. The Ion illustrates the great importance of the family in Greek ideas and the Trachiniae the peculiar conditions of married life at that time.

In the first mentioned play Creusa's hostility to Ion is generally attributed to her jealousy of Xuthus for having found a son, while she herself remains childless. This motive, however, is not sufficient, because she had had a son prior to her marriage to Xuthus, and might still hope to discover him. The arguments that influenced her to plan Ion's death were founded rather upon the intrusion of an alien into the family. It is this motive that is stressed during the scene between Creusa and the paedagogus, though it is possible that the other feeling was also present to some extent. Creusa was a descendant of the autochthonous Erechtheids, and as such belonged to one of the oldest and most important families in the land. Naturally the paedagogus would seek for the argument most

likely to sway her, and it is this point that he stresses:- Xuthus' intention to bring into the ancient Erechtheid house a stranger, from a different class, who should eventually inherit their property and power, cf. *l*. 837.

ἐκ δούλης τινὸς γυναικὸς ἐς σὸν δῶμα δεσπότην ἄγειν.

also *l*. 810: δωμάτων τ' Ἐρεχθέως ἐκβαλλόμεσθα.

It seems clear that we have here an instance of the way in which the ideas of the fifth century were reflected in the representation of legendary antiquity. Adoption was quite regular in the fifth century B.C., as we see from the speeches of Isaeus, but the person adopted seems to have been most frequently a nephew or a grandson, a person of similar social status to that of his adoptive family. Hence the hostility of Creusa. Xuthus, of course, has no objection to the reception of Ion into the family, because he believes him to be his own son. He has no particular interest in preserving the individuality of the Erechtheid line, being himself originally an alien intruder.

The attitude of Deianeira to Iole in the Trachiniae is generally cited as an instance of the extreme submissiveness of the former and a mark of weakness, or even of virtue in her character, but it seems likely that it is rather an example of the effect of contemporary ideas on the writings of the poet. The position of married women in those times

was very different from what it is to-day, and their education was so inferior that they were never regarded as much more than a kind of housekeeper, while the men regularly sought for more satisfying companionship among the ἑταῖραι. Deianeira's words, *ll*. 552-3,

> ἀλλ' οὐ γάρ, ὥσπερ εἶπον, ὀργαίνειν καλὸν
> γυναῖκα νοῦν ἔχουσαν.

seem to reflect the common attitude of the time, rather than any peculiarity of her nature. She only feels it too much to endure when she realises that she is expected to live beneath the same roof with her young rival; and even then she shows no anger, either against her or against Heracles.

When passages such as these occur in the literature of any period, particularly in the drama, which is the truest mirror of the times, they point clearly to vital differences in the general trend of ideas and customs.

There is a second point in the Trachiniae which strikes us as rather strange, the harshness of Heracles' treatment of Deianeira. He never once shows any affection or pity for her, even after her innocence is established. This, Prof. Jebb feels, would have been as revolting to a contemporary audience as it is to us, and deprecates any over-hasty assumption "that such a feeling is peculiar to the modern mind". It is curious, however, if this be so,

that scenes of this nature are so frequent in the extant tragedies, and especially so in the dramas of Sophocles, that "most tender of poets".

An instance very similar to that just mentioned is the scene between Ajax and Tecmessa. Prof. Jebb thinks that Ajax' farewell words to his son Eurysaces incidentally reveal his affection for his wife; but there is no mention nor suggestion of her in the speech, except when Ajax bids the child "nurse thy tender life for this thy mother's joy". This seems rather slender evidence on which to base a statement so utterly contradictory to the general impression given by the preceding scenes, which afforded plentiful opportunity for the display of any such feelings as existed. Marriage was evidently very much an affair of business in those days, and any feelings of affection that might arise were purely incidental.

Scenes of what seems to us unnecessary harshness do not, however, occur only between husband and wife in Sophocles' plays, but, in two strikingly parallel instances, between sisters. The attitude of Antigone to Ismene, and of Electra to Chrysothemis strikes us as intolerant and even brutal. Yet it does not seem likely that the poet would repeat such an episode if it had met with severe disapproval; in fact, the coincidence rather suggests that

he was particularly fond of that situation, and found it pleasing to his audience. If we forget the brutality for the moment, and look at the scene as an expression of a natural contempt of indignant strength for hesitating weakness, the point of view which would, it seems, appeal most strongly to a people who could expose weakly children at birth for the sake of the general efficiency of the state, it does not appear too improbable that here again our appreciation is hampered by a certain incompatibility of sentiment.

CHAPTER V.

This question of the unities is one that has arisen through a series of misunderstandings. Aristotle, in his Poetics, lays down certain general rules about the structure of a good play, which really amount to not much more than a statement of actual practice. These statements were converted by Horace, in the Ars Poetica, or rather by his Alexandrian authorities, into fixed maxims, and from him they passed to the French writers on the subject, till in Boileau's "Art Poétique" they became hard and fast rules, the result of which is seen in the stiff and frigid forms of the French classical drama.

It will be well to see what Aristotle, who wrote on contemporary and recent usage, actually says on the subject. In the Poetics, 1449 b. 12 ff., we read ἔτι δὲ τῷ μήκει ἡ μὲν (τραγῳδία) ὅτι μάλιστα πειρᾶται ὑπὸ μίαν περίοδον ἡλίου εἶναι ἢ μικρὸν ἐξαλλάττειν, ἡ δὲ ἐποποιία ἀόριστος τῷ χρόνῳ, καὶ τούτῳ διαφέρει, καίτοι τὸ πρῶτον ὁμοίως ἐν ταῖς τραγῳδίαις τοῦτο ἐποίουν καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἔπεσιν. Evidently the plots of the early dramas were unrestricted with regard to time.

The limitation to a single day, as nearly as possible, is a natural result of the continuous presence of the chorus in the orchestra, and was merely a matter of expediency, due to the conditions of production; but from this passage arose the idea of a "Unity of Time", which must on no account be broken.

Consequently attempts are made to explain any apparent infringement of this rule, where no explanation is really necessary. Aeschylus' Persae, Agamemnon and Eumenides all contain obvious breaches of the Unity of Time, being more closely akin to the early dramas before mentioned, but the people of that time had not even Aristotle's vague pronouncement to disturb their enjoyment of the plays. It seems inconceivable that the original audience should have been at all distressed by the amazing rapidity of the journeys in the Trachiniae of Sophocles and the Supplices of Euripides. They had no accurate knowledge of topography or distances, and were no doubt quite prepared to believe that a certain character had been to the place from which they saw him return.

Again in <u>Poetics</u> 1459 b.23, Aristotle mentions as an advantage of epic over tragedy that it had more diversity of interest through being able to shift at will from one scene to another:- διὰ τὸ ἐν μὲν τραγῳδίᾳ μὴ

ἐνδέχεσθαι ἅμα πραττόμενα πολλὰ μέρη μιμεῖσθαι, ἀλλὰ τὸ ἐπὶ τῆς σκηνῆς καὶ τὸ τῶν ὑποκριτῶν μέρος μόνον. ἐν δὲ ἐποποιίᾳ διὰ τὸ διήγησιν εἶναι ἔστι πολλὰ μέρη ἅμα ποιεῖν περαινόμενα.

Hence, presumably, the "Unity of Place". Surely no special justification is needed for a change of scene such as that in the Ajax from the tent to the shore, or that in the Eumenides from Delphi to Athens, where the action is continuous, and where the sole objection is that the chorus can be seen really in the same place all the time. These changes the audience might have regarded as rather bold, but they would no doubt have accepted them as an essential part of the play, instead of regarding them as a defect.

If we believe that in the Shakespearian drama the scene could be changed as often as desired merely by the alteration of a label, there is no reason to feel that such changes proved too great a call on the imagination of the Athenian audience.

On the third, the "Unity of Action", Aristotle does undoubtedly insist. <u>Poetics</u> 1451 a.30, χρὴ οὖν --- οὕτω καὶ τὸν μῦθον, ἐπεὶ πράξεως μίμησίς ἐστι, μιᾶς τε εἶναι ταύτης καὶ ὅλης ---. ὃ γὰρ προσὸν ἢ μὴ προσὸν μηδὲν ποιεῖ ἐπίδηλον, οὐδὲν μόριον τοῦ ὅλου ἐστίν.

The unity of action is evidently, and naturally, the most important. This unity does not, however, consist in having a single hero, as Aristotle himself remarks, - Μῦθος δ' ἐστὶν εἷς οὐχ ὥσπερ τινὲς οἴονται ἐὰν περὶ ἕνα ᾖ· πολλὰ γὰρ καὶ ἄπειρα τῷ ἑνὶ συμβαίνει, ἐξ ὧν ἐνίων οὐδέν ἐστιν ἕν. [1]

It appears then that attempts to attribute a single hero or heroine to plays like the Hecuba or Phoenissae, which seem to be essentially a series of pictures, with little real unity in the sense in which Aristotle takes it, are bound to be unfruitful. Even if a single hero be found, the events connected with him are none the less disconnected. There is, it seems, a certain class of play to which the Aristotelian unity of action cannot be applied. Aristotle himself probably thought them very bad plays, and so they may be, but one can well imagine an Athenian audience taking a great delight in them. It does not follow that a play is good because it is Greek, any more than it follows that a play is unsuccessful because it is, according to certain theories of composition, a bad play. One has always to reckon with the audience.

Now the Athenian audience, that is to say, the Athenian people, for the terms are in this case coincident,

1. 1451 a. 16.

had always a great liking for processions and pageantry of all kinds, which no doubt became even greater by the time of Euripides, when they were perhaps, if one dare suggest it, growing a little tired of the stereotyped perfection of the regular drama.[1] There are two plays at least of Euripides, the Troades and the Hecuba, which seem to belong to a distinct class, episodic in nature, without a particular hero or heroine, but giving a vivid series of pictures of the horrors of war, sufficiently connected by some general idea.

The Troades is generally recognised and accepted as an episodic play, but attempts have been made to bring the Hecuba under the regular type.

The difficulty of regarding this play as episodic, like the Troades, seems to be mainly in the name, which certainly leads us to expect one central character. Had the play been given some comprehensive name, such as Αἰχμαλωτίδες, we should have found no difficulty in perceiving a kind of composite hero in "the conquered people". In structure, its resemblance to the Troades is striking, as will probably be demonstrated.

We have no ground for supposing that the only kind of Greek play was the closely-woven type which appealed

---

1. Even Aristotle himself says πρῶτον μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἂν εἴη τι μόριον τραγῳδίας ὁ τῆς ὄψεως κόσμος. Poetics, 1449b, though he does not altogether approve of it, ἡ δὲ ὄψις ψυχαγωγικὸν μὲν ἀτεχνότατον δέ, καὶ ἥκιστα οἰκεῖον τῆς ~~τραγῳδίας~~ ποιητικῆς. 1450b.

to Aristotle: indeed, his frequent strictures on episodic plots indicate that they must have been fairly common, though the best tragedies, no doubt, had well-defined and coherent plots.

Miss Matthaei, in her book "Studies in Greek Tragedy", brings forward an interesting theory to explain the Hecuba as one consistent whole. The play appears to be divided into two sections, the first of which deals with Polyxena, the second with Hecuba. Pflugk proposed to unite the two halves by understanding a common theme of the "Sorrows of Hecuba". Hermann rejects this view, denying the unity of the play. Miss Matthaei seeks to trace a common theme of justice, conventional in the first half of the play, natural in the second — the eternal contrast of νόμος and φύσις. Hecuba stands for the rights of the individual against the community. The claim of Achilles was binding on the community to which, though dead, he still belonged, so that conventional justice, combined with power, was ranged against the natural rights of Hecuba. According to Miss Matthaei, the period of apparent peace in the middle of the play makes the contrast between the rights of the community, as exemplified in the first part of the play, and those of the individual shown in the second even more effective. She regards the first part

as dramatically necessary to the second and the second to the first.

This view may have a certain plausibility when the play can be viewed as a whole, but the impression it gives as one reads it for the first time, not knowing of the change of heroine until it comes, is rather that of a series of vivid pictures illustrating the horrors of war. Moreover, a detailed comparison of this play with the Troades, which is generally recognised as such a series of pictorial episodes, appears to give complete justification for regarding both plays as belonging to one type, and as a new departure from the customary form of tragedy.

Troades.

1-47. Poseidon discourses on the fortunes of Troy.

48-97. Athena proposes a combination to compass the downfall of the Greeks for sacrilege against her temples.

98-152) 153-234) Threnos and Commos (Hecuba and chorus), on past woes and future fate.

235-307. Talthybius announces result of assignment of captives. Cassandra to Agamemnon, Andromache to Neoptolemus, Hecuba to Ulysses, and Polyxena's doom.

308. Cassandra prophesies the ruin she will bring on Agamemnon, and her own death; also that her mother will not go to Odysseus' halls: she foretells the wanderings of Odysseus.

511-576. Further lamentations from the chorus.

577. Andromache-commos to 607. News of Polyxena's death.

634-683. She speaks of her own virtues and of the blessings of death. Hecuba takes comfort in the thought that Andromache's son still survives.

709. Talthybius announces the doom of the child.

800-859. Chorus.

860. Menelaus discloses the plan of taking Helen to Greece and killing her there: approved by Hecuba.

895. Helen pleads for her life. 914-965 defence. 969-1032 Hecuba's answer.

1060-1122. Chorus.

1123. Talthybius brings back the body of the child.

1156-1259. Preparations for burial.

1260. Talthybius orders departure for the ships. 1332 play ends with commos on the burning of Troy.

Hecuba.

1-58. Shade of Polydorus explains the situation.

59-99. Hecuba reveals dreams: followed by threnos.

100-155. Chorus. Fate of Polyxena disclosed.

155-176. Threnos - Hecuba.

177. Polyxena enters and is told of the decision.

218. Discussion about the sacrifice. Hecuba speaks against it 251-295. Odysseus defends it 299-333. Polyxena declares herself willing to die. 341-378, farewells, etc.

444-483. Chorus. Wonders as to its future.

484. Talthybius summons Hecuba to bury Polyxena, and recounts her death 517-582. 585-628 general reflections of Hecuba.

629-656. Chorus, on the trouble caused by Paris.

657. Servant brings the corpse of Polydorus, found while fetching water for the burial of Polyxena.

726. Agamemnon comes to fetch Hecuba. She begs him to avenge her upon the murderer of Polydorus. He refuses. 864-97. She declares her intention of taking revenge herself.

905-952. Chorus, on the last night of Troy.

953. Polymestor enters, with his children, in answer to Hecuba's summons. Discussion, excuses, etc. Polymestor is blinded and the children killed.

1109. Agamemnon undertakes to judge the matter. Defence of Polymestor 1132-1182. Reply of Hecuba 1187-1237. Agamemnon declares Hecuba's revenge justifiable. 1240-51, Polymestor foretells the metamorphosis of Hecuba and the death of Cassandra. Agamemnon orders him to be despatched to a desert island. Play ends at v. 1295.

The similarity between these two plays is striking. In each case the prologue, setting forth the situation, is followed by a threnos, after which an envoy enters from the Greeks. Cassandra's prophecies of her future correspond to Polyxena's reflections on death. At a similar point in each play (vv. 709 and 657) comes the second

catastrophe, the discovery of Polydorus' body and the doom of Astyanax. In each play this is followed by a conflict of arguments, in the Troades between Menelaus and Helen, and in the Hecuba between Hecuba and Polymestor. The scene between Helen and Hecuba, with its balanced defence and accusation, corresponds to that between Hecuba and Odysseus about the sacrifice of Polyxena, though they do not occupy the same position in each play.

From this comparison it appears that the Hecuba, like the Troades, is a picture of the aftermath of the Trojan war, centering round the family of Hecuba. The metamorphosis of Hecuba, of which some critics, including Miss Matthaei, make so much as an indication of the continuous development of her character throughout the play, seems to be merely thrown in with a number of other prophecies in Euripides' usual manner.

The modern tendency in criticising Greek tragedy seems to be to seek for a consistent and well-proportioned plot in every play, regardless of whether this method of interpretation improves or harms the play, from a purely dramatic point of view. The very fact that Aristotle makes frequent mention of episodic plays, even though it be only to express disapproval, indicates beyond question that such plays were common. Of course, Aristotle himself,

with his great admiration for the wonderful plot of the Oedipus Tyrannus, could not be expected to appreciate an episodic play, but the whole audience did not necessarily share his views. No doubt there were some, even as there are to-day, who preferred character-drawing to plot;[1] there were probably others who cared for neither, but were satisfied with the "inartistic" spectacle. It is only to be expected that a certain number of these episodic plays should have survived among those which we now possess. The Troades and Hecuba have been shown to belong to this type. An analysis of the Phoenissae and the Hercules Furens will demonstrate that these also have not a well-defined plot, but are of an episodic nature. This does not mean that they are bad plays; they probably acted extremely well, but they do not and cannot be made to conform with the requirements of Aristotle. Any attempt to bring them into line with well-constructed plays like the Oedipus Tyrannus starts with the assumption that they are something which the poet never meant them to be, and is therefore detrimental to their proper appreciation.

The question of interpolation in the Phoenissae is for the present purpose irrelevant. Various critics have wished to excise various portions,[2] and the judgment

---

1. Aristotle indeed, depreciates "character", Poetics 1450 passim, but he cannot be taken as the absolute criterion of fifth-century taste.

2. The chief of these suspect passages are the τειχοσκοπία, or review of the rival camps, and the second enumeration of combatants in the messenger's speech, vv. 1090-1199.

between them must for lack of evidence remain a matter of opinion. However, the fact that so many different passages have been suspected of interpolation is in itself suggestive. The play is evidently one of very loose connection, far removed from the type which Aristotle so admired - χρὴ οὖν -- τὰ μέρη συνεστάναι τῶν πραγμάτων οὕτως, ὥστε μετατιθεμένου τινὸς μέρους ἢ ἀφαιρουμένου διαφέρεσθαι καὶ κινεῖσθαι τὸ ὅλον.[1]
Suffice it to say here that the τειχοσκοπία would make a fine spectacle, and that the motive for the second enumeration of combatants in the Messenger's speech may have been to avoid the unhappy subject of the duel: see Phoen. 1217.

αἰαῖ· τί μ' οὐκ εἴασας ἐξ εὐαγγέλου
φήμης ἀπελθεῖν, ἀλλὰ μηνύσαι κακά;

An analysis of the play as it stands will be sufficient to demonstrate that though its plot is weak it contains some excellent situations and spectacular effects, such as would appeal to the Athenian audience just as much as they do at the present day to us.

The play opens with a prologue by Jocasta, who recounts the history of the race. This is followed by the much discussed τειχοσκοπία, in which Antigone and the paedagogus survey the rival camps from the walls of Thebes, and discuss various champions as they come into view. This

1. Poetics, 1451 a.30.

is a very fine descriptive scene, such as would without doubt hold the attention of any audience. At line 261 Polyneices enters, having come at Jocasta's request to negotiate with his brother, after which the spectators were treated to one of the scenes of balanced argument which were so dear to their litigious minds. The interview is fruitless, and after this point the interest flags for a while; Creon discusses methods of attack and defence, and the chorus lament that Oedipus ever lived. Then at v. 834 comes another dramatic stroke; Teiresias discloses the necessity for the sacrifice of Creon's son Menoiceus. Creon firmly refuses to listen to this warning, but on his departure Menoiceus, who has heard all, tells the chorus of his intention to sacrifice himself for the city, a situation of great dramatic power. Now once more the interest flags, and we have the somewhat tedious messenger's speech, describing the arrangement of the champions at the gates. As we have heard all this once before, in the τειχοσκοπία (one or other of these scenes may of course be interpolated, but it is exceedingly difficult to judge between them), this speech must inevitably fall a little flat, but it is soon redeemed by the striking announcement of the intended single combat between the brothers. Creon, returning to summon Jocasta to help in the burial of

Menoiceus, hears of the duel which is to save his city from destruction, a fine dramatic touch. The second messenger's speech (v. 1335 foll:) cannot be charged with dulness, for it tells of the contest, the death of the two brothers in a single instant, and the suicide of Jocasta. The ending of the play, in which Creon ejects Oedipus, who now appears for the first time, from the city seems a little unnecessary, but the poet was probably anxious to get in some reference to Antigone and her defiance of the decree concerning Polyneices. It is curious, if this is so, that he should have depicted her as following Oedipus into exile, but the other story is also hinted at in the course of the scene.

Clearly there is no lack of dramatic situation or stirring description and spectacle in this play, though in construction it is certainly far from perfect, being disjointed and "episodic".

The "Hercules Furens" is another example of the episodic type of play, though its connections are not quite so loose as those of the Phoenissae. At the opening of the play Amphitryo explains the situation. Lycus has seized the land and made him and Heracles' wife and children captive. On Lycus' entry (v. 140) he and Amphitryo enter into an extraordinarily frigid debate as to the relative merits of the bow and spear for fighting. It seems as if

any kind of discussion was acceptable to the Athenians, brought up as they were in the atmosphere of the schools of rhetoric. Finally, Lycus announces his intention to kill Amphitryo, Megara and the children, who obtain leave to go into the palace and array themselves for death. Heracles, returning from his last labour, and finding his wife and children in this sad plight, at once determines to have his revenge upon the usurper. The scene in which Amphitryo comes out to lure Lycus into the house, following upon the previous events, if of great dramatic interest.

The subsequent appearance of Iris and Lyssa above the house must have been extremely good from a spectacular point of view. From this point the play moves apace. The messenger describes the madness of Heracles and the slaying of his wife and children, and when the audience is worked up to the full pitch of excitement the eccyclema reveals Heracles lying in the midst of the havoc that his frenzy has wrought. The arrival of Theseus "ex machina", as Dr. Verrall puts it, does not serve to cut any knot or solve a problem, the supposed function of the "deus ex machina"; the situation is already irremediable, but the friendly sympathy of the hero brings the play to a close on the customary note of quiet.

Clearly there is much in this play also that would be effective in production, so much indeed that it is extremely doubtful whether the audience would ever notice that the action is divided, as it were, into two halves by the change of the main interest from Megara and the children, in the first half of the play, to Heracles, in the second part.

Four extant plays, at least, are demonstrably of an episodic nature. This fact, combined with Aristotle's constant references, seems to point to great caution in undertaking any attempt to make a plot appear consistent by elaborate theories as to its inner meaning. It is essential to remember the possibility of a play being episodic, and not intended to have a "good" plot in the Aristotelian sense.

CHAPTER VI.

On one play, the Bacchae, there has been so much discussion that it merits separate consideration. Here again it is essential to keep in mind the effect that the play must have presented to the original audience, and to enter as far as possible into their ideas. They had grown accustomed to expect a certain type of play from Euripides, who must have been at that time the "ultra-modern" playwright.[1] The traditional gods met with little respect at his hands; he was probably too much of an idealist to be able to endure the acts and characters generally attributed to them. When, therefore, a play appeared, dealing entirely with the religion of Dionysus, the audience would no doubt expect the same kind of treatment here as elsewhere. But here, it seems, they would have been surprised; Dionysus meets with much more sympathy from Euripides than any of the other gods. But even he is not wholly approved. There are two sides to his nature, and these are brought before the people in close connection, as though for comparison. The Bacchae would appear to be a study, not necessarily intentional, of the two sides of the Bacchic religion, or

---

1. Arist. 1453 b. distinguishes Euripides from the older poets, - ὥσπερ οἱ παλαιοὶ ἐποίουν... καθάπερ καὶ Εὐριπίδης ἐποίησεν...

rather of the Bacchic religion and its later and higher manifestation of Orphism;[1] a juxtaposition of Dionysus Omophagos with Dionysus Meilichios. This is merely a statement of the effect which the play presents; whether such an effect was intended it seems impossible to say, but the very apparent conflict of the two aspects of the Dionysus religion as shown forth in the play makes it appear incredible that such a work should have been a recantation of all the poet's former opinions.

Various attempts have been made to interpret the meaning of the play. Two critics, Professor Norwood and Dr. Verrall, regard it as a further example of Euripides' rationalism. Some feel it to be entirely opposed in nature to the rest of his work; others hold intermediate views.

The play presents a number of difficulties, which Prof. Norwood, in "The Riddle of the Bacchae" (1908), takes as the foundation for his proof that it is not a recantation. The three main points are as follows: (1) The Palace Miracle; (2) The part played by Dionysus himself; (3) The character of Pentheus.

The whole of the action subsequent to the palace-miracle forbids the reader or spectator, according to

1. Cf. F.M. Cornford, Greek Religious Thought, pp. 52 ff, and Farnell, The Higher Aspects of Greek Religion, p. 139.

Prof. Norwood, to imagine that the palace has really fallen. Pentheus and Dionysus go in and out as if nothing had happened;[1] Thebans arriving later notice nothing, neither do Cadnus or Agave. The fall of the palace could not, of course, have been represented on the stage, but one might regard this as accepted by convention, if it were not for the other objections. Another possibility is that the palace merely shakes, but this is excluded, thinks Prof. Norwood, by the phrase δώματ' ἔρρηξεν χαμᾶζε[2]. Neither can we take it that only part of the palace is destroyed, since συντεθράνωται ἅπαν. In any case the stable in which Dionysus had been confined could not be referred to as Πενθέως μέλαθρα, δώματα Πενθέως. Norwood's conclusion is that Euripides expressly shows the miracle not happening.

The second point against taking the Bacchae as a plea for the Bacchic religion is the character of Dionysus himself. The death of Pentheus was a punishment for the insult offered to Dionysus, not by himself, but by his mother and her sisters. Even Dionysus' own followers did not identify him with the god, so that Pentheus, who had never seen him before, could hardly be expected to do so. In any case, even Agave and her sisters could only

---

1. vv. 604, 642, 846, 861.

2. v. 633.

have said that Semeles' lover was not Zeus but a mortal; and according to the usual system, even if Zeus were the father, her son would only be a hero, not a god. Pentheus then is only a pawn in the revenge upon Agave, and Dionysus is shown up in an extremely bad light. Moreover, his own prophecies are not fulfilled, for though he says αὐτῷ θεὸς γεγὼς ἐνδείξομαι, Pentheus nevertheless dies in complete ignorance of the stranger's identity.

The character of Pentheus also tells against the suggestion that Euripides was in sympathy with Dionysus. If this were so, Pentheus ought to have been a regular stage tyrant, whereas he is nothing of the sort. His condemnation of the new rites is based on reports which he has no particular reason to disbelieve. He does not give any opinion at all on the purely theological side of the question; his only concern is about the morality of the actual rites which are in progress: and by the words πλαστοῖσι βακχείαισιν v. 218, he gives the impression that he does recognise some real Bacchic rites and appreciates their value. The messenger and Cadmus both show deep regret for his death, and utter sincere tributes to his virtues, which by implication all tells against Dionysus.

Various minor supposed difficulties are mentioned: the incredibility of the miracles on Cithaeron, the

disconcerting prominence given to the intrusive nature of the Dionysus worship throughout the play, and the suggestive fact that the appearance of Dionysus in bull-form, one of the main beliefs of his votaries, is put on the same level as Pentheus' vision of two suns, etc., - a common sign of intoxication. This last point forms the mainstay of Dr. Verrall's argument: he believes that Pentheus was drugged, whereas Norwood regards the influence as hypnotic. The latter does, however, suggest, in his passing reference[1] to πιστὸν Ἅιδαν, v. 1157, as "death by a potion" (!), the view later taken up by Verrall.

Norwood's own view of the play is that the Lydian must not be identified with the god Dionysus. He is in reality the son of Semele, (but not of Zeus), who had been sent away and brought up in the East. He was "the first adherent of a new religion ... the worship of nature"[2], and when he had discovered the properties of the grape, began to believe in the miraculous stories of his own origin, and in his own divinity. The miraculous side of the play is to be explained by hypnotism. He does not, however, regard the curious readiness of Teiresias to accept the newcomer as a god to such hypnotic influence, but to a

1. P. 74, note 3.

2. P. 90.

previous interview in which Dionysus must have won him over to his side by arguments and promises.

Verrall's theory[1] agrees, in the main, with Norwood's, except that he does not believe there was any previous understanding between Dionysus and Teiresias, outside the play. It is interesting to note this point, because Norwood cited in support of his view Verrall's own similar theory of the Andromache. This, however, assumed some previous play in which the necessary action took place, an hypothesis which even Dr. Verrall does not regard as conceivable in the case of the Bacchae. He sees no need for such a supposition. One god more or less makes no difference to the professional seer, who explains the legend of Dionysus' birth by the most rationalistic of reasonings. Verrall elaborates on Norwood's theory with regard to the palace-miracle, taking συντεθράνωται to mean "it is all put together again". There is no evidence for such a meaning, but it has the merit of avoiding all difficulty about the ruins, since with this interpretation there are no ruins.

An instance of Dr. Verrall's verbal ingenuity is seen in his attempt to remove the difficulties which arise from the diversity of sentiments expressed by the chorus. He feels that the desire to be wafted to the "isle of

1. Bacchants of Euripides, 1910.

Aphrodite, where dwell the Loves that charm the hearts of men"[1], is unsuitable, considering the type of charge that the Bacchants have to refute. In the Classical Review, Vol. VIII, p. 85, he put forward the suggestion that these lines are meant as a scornful quotation of the other point of view.[2] In the "Bacchants of Euripides"[3], he admits that this solution is artificial and unsatisfactory, and proposes an emendation to reconcile the sense with the other utterances of the chorus.

For this purpose he would read

ἱκοίμαν — τί ποτ' ἂν τὰν
νᾶσον τᾶς Ἀφροδίτας
... οὗ δ' ἁ καλλιστευομένα (v. 409 οὗ for ὅπου)
Πιερία ...
ἐκεῖσ' ἄγε μ' ὦ Βρόμιε, Βρόμιε.

This version of the passage is more feasible than the former from the point of view of sense, but the corruption implied is palaeographically unlikely, not to say impossible.

Verrall's work was reviewed in the Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift, 1912, by W. Nestlé, whose personal opinion is that the poet was carried away by his subject,

---

1. ἱκοίμαν ποτὶ Κύπρον
νᾶσον τᾶς Ἀφροδίτας
ἐν ᾇ θελξίφρονες νέμον-
ται θνατοῖσιν Ἔρωτες. vv. 402-405.

2. The passage being introduced by μαινομένων οἵδε | τρόποι καὶ κακοβούλων | παρ' ἔμοιγε φωτῶν.

3. P. 154.

though his personal attitude to the gods of the traditional mythology remained substantially the same as before. Various other views have been held by different critics, e.g., E.W. Silber[1] suggests that Euripides wrote the play as a protest against the attitude of certain philosophers who, in the consideration of deep and abstract questions, run the risk of losing all the value of their own life — "ne praesentem vitae statum improbantes et vituperantes suae ipsorum vitae fructum amittant".[2] According to this view the lines 373 foll. τὸ σοφὸν δ᾽ οὐ σοφία --- are the keynote of the play, which thus comes into line with Rhys Carpenter's[3] theory that the poet's whole work inculcates the virtue of moderation in all things, a reflection of the old precept μηδὲν ἄγαν. E.C. Marchant[4] is also in agreement with this view. The difficulties of the play he does not attempt to explain -"as a constructor of a play Euripides is not always good"[5],-and he regards the Teiresias-Cadmus scene as intentionally grotesque.

---

1. De Euripidis Bacchabus dissertatio.

2. Ibid., p. 43.

3. The Ethics of Euripides.

4. College Lectures on the Exodus of the Bacchae of Euripides.

5. Op.cit., p. 12.

R. Nihard, in "Les Bacchantes d'Euripide" abandons the attempt at finding any special meaning in the play, with the remark "En realité les drames d'Euripide ne sont plus que ceux des autres poètes tragiques des pièces à thèse, mais avant tout des oeuvres poétiques".[1] This attitude appears to be eminently reasonable. It would, however, be wrong to imagine that because we do not presuppose a purpose in the play we must refrain from all speculation as to the poet's ideas, as far as they are illustrated therein.

It seems quite clear from a general survey of Euripides' work that he was strongly opposed to the traditional ideas of the gods, and that he had a high ideal of what a god ought to be; on the other hand he had to take the traditional stories as his basis, and it is only to be expected that such a thinker should treat them in an unusual manner. Though we cannot go all the way with Dr. Verrall, we can appreciate the value of his theories, inasmuch as they demonstrate this discrepancy of material and genius. In the story of the death of Pentheus, where he was as usual bound to certain legendary details, Euripides found a new god, with whom he was more in sympathy. The play throughout lays emphasis on the intrusion of Dionysus

1. Op.cit., p. 29.

into the circle of the old gods. He was different from them in essence, and yet he had acquired a certain amount of those legendary associations of the old type, which were so repugnant to Euripides. Inasmuch as his worship was akin to the Orphic religion he appealed to the poet's imagination, and when he looks on him in this light the most exquisite mystical poetry results; but Dionysus had another side which was cruel and savage, more akin to the older gods of ancient legend, and when this side is uppermost the vials of the poet's scorn are poured upon him. The two threads are so interwoven in the play that it is quite possible to make out a case for either view, for the rationalistic theory, or the complete reverse, but it seems more satisfactory to keep in mind both sides of the question, and attribute the strange confusion of the play to the dual nature of the god, whom the poet cannot altogether condemn or unreservedly praise.

While Euripides is often carried away by the sheer beauty of his subject, he does sometimes seem to pull himself up and point to the evils of excess or of misunderstanding, even in so lofty a mysticism. Had he not had the traditional legendary foundation to deal with, he might have written a very different play on the subject of Dionysus, to which no one could attribute as a motto the

words which Meunier[1] applies to the Bacchae, "tantum relligio potiut suadere malorum".

Prof. Norwood's remarks on the palace miracle, if they cannot be refuted, prove a grave objection to the view of the play just stated. If, as he seeks to prove, the miracle is expressly shown not happening, in order to throw discredit on the powers of Dionysus, then there is some ground for taking the play as a further example of elaborate rationalistic propaganda.

If the whole chorus is supposed to witness the fall of the palace, while the audience see it still standing plainly before them, either there is a manifest breach of dramatic probability, even if the audience accept the miracle by theatrical convention, since Prof. Norwood's arguments against the destruction of the building are unassailable, or we must assume the influence of hypnotism or some similar power. The person who must have exercised such power, i.e., Dionysus, is not present on the stage, so that there could have been no indication of the reason for the combined delusion falling on fifteen people simultaneously. If the chorus say they see the palace fall, we must either accept the hypnotism theory or assume that the palace actually did visibly fall. Enchantments and spells of various kinds certainly were known to the Greeks

1. Les Bacchantes, Paris, 1923.

of this time, - Pentheus himself calls Dionysus γόης ἐπῳδός[1] - but it seems very unlikely that the audience would realise that such a charm was being exerted on Dionysus' own votaries. Indeed, this supposition seems quite unnecessary: Pentheus alone need be deluded. If then the chorus say the palace falls, we assume that it is supposed to have done so. But do they say this? A detailed examination of the scene in question will throw some light on the subject.

In line 587 the chorus cry

τάχα τὰ Πενθέως μέλαθρα διατι-
νάξεται πεσήμασιν.

"soon will the halls of Pentheus be shaken to their fall". This is merely an expression of their fear, produced by the shaking of the palace, to which also v. 591 refers -

εἴδετε λάινα κίοσιν ἔμβολα
διάδρομα τάδε;

διάδρομα need not mean "falling to pieces". In a building composed of solid blocks placed upon each other without mortar, a thorough shaking (διατινάσσω) might well produce gaps in the masonry, between the blocks of the architrave.

In v. 604, Dionysus comes out and remarks calmly,

ᾔσθησθ', ὡς ἔοικε, Βακχίου
διατινάξαντος τὰ Πενθέως.

---

1. v. 234.

"You seem to have noticed how Bacchius shook Pentheus' house". He could not have said this if the palace was lying in ruins at their feet, nor is it likely that he would have said it if he had just been forcing them to believe that the destruction had taken place. V. 623 refers to shaking only,

ἀνετίναξ' ἐλθὼν ὁ Βάκχος δῶμα.

In v. 628 Pentheus is said to have darted into the house; at 636 Dionysus, ἥσυχος ἐκβάς, appears on the scene. It is impossible to believe that the house was supposed to have been destroyed between these two points, especially as in v. 638 someone is heard coming out of it - ψοφεῖ γοῦν ἀρβύλη δόμων ἔσω. Yet in v. 633 appears the extraordinary statement

δώματ' ἔρρηξεν χαμᾶζε· συντεθράνωται δ' ἅπαν
πικροτάτους ἰδόντι δεσμοὺς τοὺς ἐμούς.

συντεθράνωται is only used in this place, and our only indication of its meaning is Hesychius' συμπέπτωκε. Dr. Verrall's translations "it is all put together again", from σύν and θρᾶνος, a beam end, presupposes the hypnotism theory, which has been discarded and moreover does not fit in with the following line, "so that he wishes he had never seen me in captivity". Whatever συντεθράνωται means, there is no doubt about ἔρρηξεν χαμᾶζε

"he broke down the house to the ground". But the whole scene, with its recurrence of δώματα, δόμους, μέλαθρα, which seems to imply that the palace remains intact, appears expressly fashioned to emphasise the fact that he had done nothing of the sort. This conclusion appears at first sight to bring us back to Professor Norwood's theory. But there is a further step which obviates the need for accepting either the hypnotism or the deliberate discredit thrown on the miraculous powers of Dionysus which are the basis of his solution. In v. 628 we hear that ὁ Βρόμιος --- φάσμ' ἐποίησεν κατ' αὐλήν, and then in v. 632 come the words πρὸς δὲ τοῖσδ' αὐτῷ τάδ' ἄλλα Βάκχιος λυμαίνεται .... Evidently δώματ' ἔρρηξεν χαμᾶζε is put on the same level with the previous delusion of Pentheus. Dionysus may perhaps be assumed to use a little rhetorical exaggeration at this point. It is an easy step from "the palace was shaken" to ἔρρηξεν χαμᾶζε, which need not mean that the whole building collapsed. Perhaps the rest of the sentence, συντεθράνωται δ' ἅπαν means "and everything is in confusion, so that he wishes he had never seen me in captivity. The singular ἅπαν following δώματα must, it seems, have a general sense, such as the suggested translation gives.

Assuming then that the palace did not fall, and that no one but Pentheus was ever intended to think it did, — and even he forgets all about it immediately afterwards — we have in this scene only an instance of the supernatural atmosphere which pervades the play. Dionysus shook the palace and kindled a flame on his mother's tomb. In the mind of Pentheus the flame was exaggerated into a conflagration, why not therefore the shaking into the total ruin of the house? Even the chorus were so stricken with fear that they thought the palace was coming down upon them. Of course the earthquake could not have been represented on the stage, but there would surely be little difficulty in imagining it.

The miracles on Cithaeron which Prof. Norwood uses as a further point in support of his view, are even more remarkable, but they are outside the play itself,[1] and as such are not bound so strongly by the requirements of probability. In any case we can, if necessary, discount a certain number of the marvels by regarding them as embroidered by the messenger's imagination, though in such a play as the Bacchae they do not strike the reader or, presumably, the spectator, as out of place.

---

1. Cf. Aristotle, Poetics, 1460 a.27. τούς τε λόγους μηδὲν ἔχειν ἄλογον, εἰ δὲ μή, ἔξω τοῦ μυθεύματος.

Taking this view of the palace-miracle the play can then be explained on the lines previously set forth, as a picture of both sides of the Dionysiac worship, a strange mixture of sympathy and criticism, entirely in keeping with the poet's earlier thought and work. It must moreover have been a wonderful spectacle and one can well believe that it was one of the most popular plays of antiquity.[1]

---

1. Cf. Haigh, Tragic Drama of the Greeks, p. 311 and n. 6.

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

Author.	Title.	Date.
Aristotle	De Arte Poetica. ed. Bywater.	1909.
Becker, W.A.	Charicles. Illustrations of the private life of the ancient Greeks.	1854.
Carpenter, Rhys	The Ethics of Euripides.	1916.
Cook, W.A.	Zeus.	1914.
Cornford, F.M.	Greek Religious Thought.	1923.
Decharme, P.	Euripide et l'Esprit de son Théâtre.	1893.
Farnell, L.R.	Higher Aspects of Greek Religion.	1911.
	Cults of the Greek States.	1896-1909.
Flickinger, R.C.	Greek Theater and its Drama.	1918.
Gomperz, Th.	Greek Thinkers. (Trans. by L. Magnus.)	1906.
Goodrich, W.J.	A Lecture on the Greek Drama with special reference to the Tragedies of Sophocles.	1897.
Haigh, A.E.	The Attic Theatre.	1907.
	The Tragic Drama of the Greeks.	1896.
Harrison, J.	Themis.	1912.
Hoernle, E.S.	The Problem of the Agamemnon.	1921.
Horace	Ars Poetica.	
Jones, W.H.S.	The Moral Standpoint of Euripides.	1906.
Kaibel, G.	De Sophoclis Antigone.	1857.
Lesky, A.	Alkestis, der Mythus und das Drama.	1925.
Marchant, E.C.	College Lectures on the Exodus of the Bacchae of Euripides.	1905.
Marett, R.R.	Anthropology and the Classics.	1908.

Author.	Title.	Date.
Masqueray, P.	Euripide et ses Idées.	1908.
Matthaei, L.E.	Studies in Greek Tragedy.	1918.
Meunier, M.	Les Bacchantes.	1923.
Meyer, G.H.	De Euripidis Bacchabus Dissertatio.	1833.
Murray, G.G.A.	The Interpretation of Ancient Greek Literature. (Inaugural Essay.)	1909.
Nihard, R.	Le Problème des Bacchantes d'Euripide.	1912.
Norwood, G.	The Riddle of the Bacchae.	1908.
"	Greek Tragedy.	1920.
"	Euripides and Shaw.	1921.
Patin, H.J.G.	Études sur les Tragiques Grecs.	1858.
Pickard Cambridge.	Dithyramb, Tragedy and Comedy.	1927.
Ridgeway, W.	The Supplices of Aeschylus.	1906.
"	The Origin of Tragedy.	1910.
"	Dramas and Dramatic Dances.	1915.
Rostrup, E.	Attic Tragedy in the Light of Theatrical History.	1923.
Sheppard, J.T.	Aeschylus and Sophocles, their work and Influence.	1927.
Silber, E.W.	De Euripidis Bacchabus Dissertatio.	1837.
Sittl, C.	Geschichte der griechischen Literatur bis auf Alexander den Grossen.	1884-7.
Spiro, F.	De Euripidis Phoenissis.	1884.
Thomson, A.D.	Euripides and the Attic Orators, a Comparison.	1898.
Verrall, A.W.	Euripides the Rationalist.	1895.
"	Four Plays of Euripides.	1905.
"	Bacchants of Euripides.	1910.
"	ed. Agamemnon of Aeschylus.	1889.

Author.	Title.	Date.
Weil, H.	ed. Alcestis of Euripides.	1891.
Wilamovitz-Moellendorf.	Aischylos-Interpretationen.	1914.

Periodical Publications.

Journal of Hellenic Studies.

Classical Quarterly.

Classical Review.

Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift.

Proceedings of the Classical Association for 1928. (Paper by Miss Glover on "The Appreciation and Interpretation of Greek Drama".)

THE LITERARY TYPEWRITING OFFICE
(Louise Jacobs.)
80, MUSEUM STREET, W.C.1.
Telephone Museum 1953.

THE LITERARY TYPEWRITING OFFICE
(Louise Jacobs.)
30, MUSEUM STREET, W.C. 1.
Telephone Museum 1953.

THE CONFUSION BETWEEN MORAL AND AESTHETIC IDEAS IN GREEK LITERARY CRITICISM AND PHILOSOPHY.

Ater a brief introduction on the nature of 'aesthetic' and 'moralistic' criticism, the development of Greek literary criticism has been traced from its earliest beginnings in the invective of Xenophanes and Heraclitus as far as the age of Plotinus. The attempt has been made to show how philosophers, grammarians and poets all made their individual contributions towards the development of the science of literary criticism as the modern world knows it, and the progress has been viewed in the light of the gradual weakening of the hold of the moralistic attitude which informed the criticism of the early philosophers.

After the criticism of the early philosophic schools, the contributions of the Sophists towards literary studies and the criticism of Aristophanes and the Old Comedy have been briefly reviewed. The next two sections are devoted to the aesthetic theories of Plato and Aristotle respectively, and the last deals briefly with the later Peripatetics, the Alexandrian scholars, the Stoics and Epicureans, Longinus, and finally the Neo-Platonists